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TALKS ABOUT JESUS.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

We have had no end of discussion over the questions, Who are Christians? and What is Christianity? And, so long as the present indefinite methods are followed, there is no apparent reason why there ever should be any end. No first principles or fixed starting-point being held in common, each one chooses his own premises, according to the law of affinity, and then sails easily on to the conclusion he prefers. While very satisfactory to one party, it naturally has little effect on the other. Beecher said, some years ago, that most people go through the Bible like a magnet through a dish of sand containing iron filings, and "come out of it with the texts they like sticking all over them." No better illustration of this can be found than the current discussion about Christianity. Let us see if there is not a method, or a few principles, that all intelligent and honest persons must accord as guides.

To the Catholic, the ultimate authority is the Church. The Church's word is as divine as any recorded utterance of Jesus himself. And, in any case, it is the Church that must decide what Jesus meant, what the Apostles meant, and what the Fathers meant. To a Catholic, then, Christianity is what the Church, in the properly constituted way, pronounces it to be.

When we come to the Orthodox Protestant, the matter at first sight would seem to be equally clear. The Bible is held to be infallibly inspired, and Christianity is simply what the Bible declares it to be. But now we are met with an element of confusion. The principle of Protestantism asserts the "right of private judgment" as to what the Bible means; and the history of Prot-

estantism shows plainly that it is capable of meaning a good many different things. All the Bible is of equal authority to a man consistently Orthodox: therefore he does not feel compelled to construct his Christian system entirely, or even mainly, out of the actual history and teaching of Jesus. And, as a matter of fact, the larger part of the material is found in the words of Paul.

But now we come to a third position. Many Orthodox writers and preachers — with perhaps a questionable consistency — and all "Liberal Christians" have come to the point of saying that the highest and only ultimate authority in this matter is Jesus himself. They say, "We will pass by the self-constituted interpreters and ushers, and press on to the inner court, and listen to what the Master himself has to say."

This latter position sounds logical and easy. It is certainly the one that seems most rational. If Jesus had any definite purpose, and tried to teach a particular thing, he probably not only knew what it was, but also gave utterance to it. If he knew anything that it was essential to man's welfare that man should know, and did not speak it, we may most certainly feel entitled to question his "good-will toward man." I think, then, that we may take it for granted that he said what he thought ought to be said.

The next question is, Can we find out what he really did say?

To clear the way for an answer, a few things must be premised.

1. We know that the disciples misunderstood, and so misinterpreted, many things he said while he was with them. It is only natural to suppose that they did the same after his death. For example, Paul, our earliest witness,— for his letters were written before either of the "Gospels"— speaks of the possibility of his having been charged with baptizing *in his own name*. Of course this would have been simply absurd, had it been known — as in Matt. xxviii., 19 — that Jesus had left on authoritative record the regular church formula for that ordinance. Again, if the disciples had known that, in the same explicit manner, Jesus had commanded them to "disciple all nations," the early and bitter dispute as to the admission of the Gentiles to the Church could

by no possibility ever have arisen. Some parts of the record, then, we know cannot be correct.

2. We must pass wholly by the so-called Gospel of John. We need not dogmatically deny the traditional authorship. But the fact that we cannot always tell whether it is "John" or Jesus who is speaking; and the furthur fact, that even Orthodox critics — like Prof. Robertson Smith and Dr. Edwin A. Abbott, in their articles in the last edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica — either doubt or deny the Johannine authorship, compel us to leave this book out of account when we are trying to be sure as to what Jesus really said.

3. The same Orthodox Prof. Smith,— together with almost all competent and unbiassed critics,— admits that even Mark, Matthew, and Luke, are only "unapostolic digests" of earlier traditions as to what Jesus was, did, and said. It is now pretty well settled that Mark is the oldest of the first three Gospels. The Encyclopedia Britannica's article of Dr. Abbott considers this conclusively proved. The reader is referred to his article (Gospels) for the method and force of that proof. And even Mark was not finished in its present shape for many years after the crucifixion.

4. Mark contains only twenty-eight verses not also contained in either Matthew or Luke. The problem of the relations of these three Gospels to each other is now explained by the existence of a more or less fixed and settled tradition that preceded the composition of either of them, and to which they all had access.

5. These three — the synoptics, or the Gospels that *see together* — have a very large element, a tradition in common, beside the additions which are peculiar to each. *This common element represents so much of the tradition as had already become so fixed that neither of the writers felt at liberty to change it.* Each one added to this other things he had heard and considered true. But of course the threefold testimony has a weight of authority not possessed by either one alone. This common element — the triple tradition — is so large that a complete life of Jesus can be constructed by using only those words and phrases which all three of the synoptics use in common. The addition to this

triple tradition of parables and sayings not contained in it does not essentially alter the portrait.

Here, then, in the triple tradition, if anywhere, we shall be able to find traces of what Jesus really was and did and said. This takes us back as far, and as near to his person, as we can ever hope to go.

But now that we have got the triple tradition, what shall we do with it? How shall we treat it?

Many prominent preachers, teachers, and writers seem to suppose themselves at liberty to pick and choose as they please, like the magnet among the iron filings. They take what they like. They construct an *ideal* Jesus of their own, and give out a definition of Christianity in accordance with what their ideal Jesus said or ought to have said. But, if this method is valid, then there is no use of study or thought or criticism. It seems to me utterly irrational and unscientific. *The surest means we have of knowing what Jesus taught is this triple tradition.* If we cannot accept the testimony as to his teaching in one direction, I see not how we can in any other. We are shut up to one of two conclusions. Either he taught about himself and his kingdom what the triple tradition says he did, or else we must surrender the hope of ever finding out what he did teach.

If what Jesus taught may rightly claim to be called Christianity, by this method, and this alone, we may hope to find out what it is.

Our nearest approach to certainty is the triple tradition; that is, so much of the story as Mark, Matthew, and Luke all agree in telling. And we have no right to assume an ideal of Jesus, and make it a Procrustes bed to the dimensions of which the triple tradition itself must be violently conformed. We have no right to depart from it, except under the guidance of the two following principles: 1. If — as is sometimes the case — the text itself contains the unconscious betrayal of the fact that the disciples misunderstood and misinterpreted Jesus, then, of course, this indication may be followed to its natural conclusion; and 2. Since they would be more likely to remember and report accurately his *teachings* than they would the supposed *facts* of his life, we may place more reliance on what some *one* witness reports of his words

than we can on similar testimony as to asserted historical incidents. This latter point will be clear to any one who will reflect that deeds have a more natural tendency to *grow* than words have; and who will further remember that the writers, ascribing to Jesus the Messianic office, would naturally and inevitably translate any supposed prophecy into history.

I have extracted the triple tradition from the Gospels, and arranged it on the basis of Mark, and in his own words. This I have supplemented by the teachings of Jesus, gathered from Mark, Matthew, and Luke, but not contained in the triple tradition. And though I shall now deal exclusively with the triple tradition, let the reader remember that no well-authenticated saying of Jesus from any other source contradicts or invalidates the conclusions to be drawn from this. After I had arranged the triple tradition, I then went through it, point by point, and, following the order of Mark, made a careful analysis of the history, the teachings, and the character of Jesus. Then, grouping together the passages which bear on the same points, I made the following summary. The references are only to Mark; but the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke can easily be referred to.

SUMMARY OF THE TRIPLE TRADITION.

Parentage of Jesus.— His mother is Mary. His father is not mentioned. No genealogy: no tracing his lineage to David.

Birthplace.— Nazareth: no mention of any other. This is implied all through.

His Gospel.— This consists of two parts, which cover it all: 1. The immediate coming of the kingdom of God, so long expected. It is "at hand." Mark i., 15, and xiii., 30. 2. Repentance and moral goodness as the only conditions of citizenship in that kingdom.

The King.— Himself. Mark viii., 27–30.

Time of setting up the kingdom.— Before "this generation" passes. Mark xiii., 30.

Manner of its establishment.— By his own miraculous appearance, with his angels, in the clouds. Mark xiii., 26, 27.

Signs of its coming.— Portents in earth and heaven. Mark xiii., 2–25.

Duties of citizenship.— All moral goodness.

Rewards of citizenship.— All good things "in this present time" (with persecutions), and eternal life. Mark x., 28–30.

Social condition of citizens.— "As the angels": no marriage or family life. Mark xii., 25.

Location of kingdom.— On earth. No hint of any other.

Personal claims.— Not son of David, but is the Messiah; casts out demons; heals diseases, forgives sins, will die, will rise the third day, appear in the clouds with angels, and judge his enemies.

Personal character.— Disregards old forms and Sabbath customs,— will "put new wine in new bottles"; chooses those who do God's will for friends and relatives; slights "signs," teaches childlikeness, calls God only good, contemns riches, teaches that service is the only true greatness, makes forgiveness the condition of forgiveness, teaches that love is all, condemns ostentation of piety, commends the little — widow's mite — if that is all one is able to do, and teaches absolute submission to God.

In the light of this analysis of the triple tradition, a few things are plain: —

1. Not a single point that is peculiar and distinctive in the Orthodox creed is here taught.

2. Jesus is purely human. There is no trace of any other than a natural birth; and there is no physical resurrection or ascension.

3. The miracles are less wonderful than many ascribed to the old prophets.

4. None of the outward rites, institutions, or priestly powers of the historic Church, are even foreshadowed. Indeed, since "the kingdom" was to be established during that generation, it becomes absurd to suppose that Jesus expected any such thing as the historic Church, with its rites and powers.

5. As to what Jesus' "Gospel" was becomes plainly apparent. He announced as "good news" that the "kingdom," so long expected, was "at hand." Of the two elements composing his gospel, one was illusion, and the other eternal truth. His Messi-

anic dream was only the local and temporary form of the hope that forever animates and leads on the race,— the hope and faith in the possible perfectibility of man. His form of this hope, like Plato's republic, was visionary. But the hope remains in our hearts still. But the *eternal part* of his Gospel lies in the conditions of citizenship in the divine kingdom which he proclaimed, — love and worship toward the divine ideal, and love and service toward man, as the motive power in lifting up the race into the realization of that ideal. This can never be outgrown.

But this needs to be supplemented by something of which Jesus seems never to have thought. Before one can truly obey God — the laws of life — and help humanity onward and upward, he must *know*. The experience of the world has demonstrated that the only method by which men can learn what God's laws are, and how humanity can be helped, is the scientific method of experiment and verification. For lack of his seeing this, some of Jesus' teaching — as concerning marriage, concerning property, non-resistance, reliance on prayer for material benefit, and against forethought — must be disregarded. It may not be the religion of the immediate future, but, when the world gets wise enough, it is easy to see that the perfect religion will be made up of two elements: 1st, a creed composed of all that the world really *knows;* and, 2d, the love of God — call it the human ideal of the divine, if you will — and love of man that Jesus teaches. The creed will be the body: the love will be the emotional mainspring, the life-giving soul. Of the two parts, one is as vital and necessary as the other.

To what extent, then, and in what sense, will a man be a "Christian" who takes the triple tradition as his starting-point?

Right here a clear-cut distinction must be drawn. Disciple of Jesus and Christian may not mean the same thing. A man who believes in and holds to the Jesus of the triple tradition most certainly will not be a Christian, in the ecclesiastical and dogmatic sense of that word. For the triple tradition contains no basis for either the ecclesiasticism or the dogma. The name "Christian" sprung up many years after the death of Jesus, and historically has, as a matter of fact, stood for what Jesus did not teach or establish.

If you call the teaching of the triple tradition Christianity, then of the two points that are essential to the Gospel, one, the *form* of the hope for man embodied in the Messianic belief, cannot be held to-day; but the other, the method of preparing for the kingdom of God, through heart-love and righteousness of character, must be a part of all high and true religion to the world's end.

A word now as to the miracles of the triple tradition, and what to do with them. They may be all summed up under the following heads: —

1. Casting out devils; 2. Healing diseases in general; 3. Walking the water and stilling the tempest; 4. Miraculous feeding of the multitude; 5. The dove at baptism, and the Transfiguration; 6. The darkness and the rending of the Temple vail at the crucifixion.

The orthodox Dr. Edwin A. Abbott, in both his "Oxford Sermons" and in his article "Gospels" in the last edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and the rationalist Mr. P. H. Wicksteed, in the two first numbers of the *Modern Review*, point out natural and rational origins for these wonder-stories, by which neither the sincerity of the Gospel writers nor the character of Jesus is in any way impeached. Misinterpretation of nervous diseases, now well known and medically treated, misinterpretation of metaphors, the natural growth of marvels, and the reading of prophecy as history, will easily explain them all.

As Dante's portrait was recovered by removing the concealing layers of whitewash and the gathered grime of centuries, so, by tearing off one traditional layer after another, we get back to "the man Jesus," in the triple tradition. "Behold the man!" And after beholding, judge — in the light of history — whether you are a Christian, whether Jesus was a Christian, and, in short, what Christianity is.

SOURCES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE.

Before coming to consider some special phases of the life and teaching of Jesus, it will be well worth our while to ask and answer the question as to what are the sources of our information concerning him. How much do we know? Are we as certain of one asserted fact concerning him or one alleged saying as of any or all others? And what is the degree of authority that attaches to this report of him or that? For, if I shall say that you are to believe one thing about Jesus, and another thing you are not to believe, that you are to accept this part of the record, and that part you are to question or reject, you certainly have a right to ask of me by what authority I make this discrimination. If we could accept the ordinary ecclesiastical idea of the New Testament as equally and infallibly inspired in every part, our task would then be comparatively light and simple: we should have but to take the different statements of letter-writer or historian or compiler of Gospel as separated parts of a dissected picture, and, according to the best of our ability, put them together and make a complete and consistent portrait of Jesus. We should find this indeed no easy work; for the different parts of our material are of such a nature that they may be fitted together in many different ways, and make many different likenesses of the "Son of Man." If we added to our orthodoxy a belief in the in-

fallible interpretation and guidance of the Church,—if, in short, we were Catholics,—the question would be very much simplified; for the church tradition and authority have settled it as to how the different parts of this dissected picture shall be put together, and how the portrait, when it is completed, shall appear. But we dare not think it religious or moral to assume either of these methods as true or right. We trust that, if there be reasons for our supposing these records to be absolutely infallible, we shall be able to find such reasons. But having learned that many of the stories and testimonies, concerning all sorts of things, that come floating down to us from the past, are very fallible, that many of them are not to be accepted or retained, we dare not take it for granted that all these are to be received without scrutiny or question. So we must trace up the records: find on what authority they stand; find, if we can, who composed them; how they have come to us in their present shape; how much we may accept as absolutely true; how much is probable; how much, if any, must be rejected as the growth of fancy, of myth, and of legend.

Standing here toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, and proposing to ask after sources of information concerning Jesus, the first witness is one that faces us all, if we only open our eyes. What is the meaning of this great fact that we call Christendom,—the *dom*, or domination, of Christ? Many and many a time, as boy and youth, have I stood on the banks of the beautiful river by the side of which I was born, and, looking over its glassy surface of a lovely day, as it spread before me placid and smooth as a lake, traced it up to where it soon lost itself among the hills. And when the air was clear, a hundred miles to the north, I saw a towering mountain, with other lesser peaks clustered around it; and I knew that this river, though I could trace it but a little

way, sprung somewhere about the feet of those grand old hills. The aspect of the mountain changed as the atmospheric medium changed, as the day was clear or cloudy; and sometimes the mists fell and shut it out completely. Nevertheless, I knew that the river traced its way up to, and was fed from, those mountain summits. I did not believe, indeed, that the whole river flowed from them; for I knew that, on this side and on that, came in tributaries from one direction and the other, and that the river was thus, as it flowed past my feet, composed of many different streams. So, standing here as we do to-day, this broad stream of a Christian civilization flowing past,—or shall I say, rather, on whose surface we ourselves are borne along,—as we trace it up, we may seem to lose it in a little way. And yet, as we look off up the centuries, we see there the towering summit of a mountainous man,—a man so high that his shadow falls all along down the ages; a man so masterly that he has given his name to the grandest nations of the world. I believe, indeed, that it is claiming far too much — as many do — to say that the total civilization of the time has flowed from the lips and the life of Jesus. For this civilization is the outcome of humanity; and humanity is thousands and thousands of years older than he. It has its spring higher and farther off than Judea or Galilee. And then, since his time, there have flowed in on all sides tributaries of art, of science, of invention, and the mingling currents of many different races and climes. And yet this one grand fact remains: that Jesus, among all the names of the past, has stood master over the best and highest thought of the world; that still this great stream, composite though it be, of human civilization, bears his name, and will bear it for ages yet to come. This is the first witness of Jesus. It witnesses his existence, it witnesses his mastery. It is no small force, standing there eighteen hundred years

ago, that reaches its hand out over the ages, and shapes and modifies and moves them to-day. They are no weak words that thrill human hearts as they have never been thrilled by any other; that is no weak ideal that is still worshipped as divine by uncounted millions of intelligent men and women.

Passing this witness, let us now go up the ages and make specific and special inquiry. We shall find it but an arid desert waste through a large part of the Middle Ages. We shall find the peaceful words of this Jesus of Nazareth sharpened into swords or bruising like battle-axes, his beautiful, poetic figures hardened into dogma, his loving words toward man metamorphosed into racks and thumb-screws, his tenderness toward children distorted into the image of a judge that thrusts down the little ones unbaptized to hell. We shall find his all-inclusive humanity contracted into narrowness and bitterness and exclusion, we shall find him who was simplicity itself made the authority for gorgeous rituals, we shall find him who founded no church made the corner-stone of a towering and oppressive hierarchy; and we shall wonder what sort of Jesus it was that could become so misinterpreted in the thought of other ages. And yet, passing over these deserts of speculation, we shall now and then find an oasis where flowers of humanity and love and charity blossom: in the midst of the coldness and hardness of human hearts, as under the edge of the mountain glacier, we shall find little Alpine flowers of purity and tenderness and truth. Even in the midst of cruel wars and desolation, we shall find the image of the Crucified softening the hearts of many, and turning them to gentleness and forgiveness and chivalrous care. And yet we shall find nothing that will really add to our knowledge of the man we seek.

We will go on, then, up to the first century of our era;

and I want, in the simplest way in the world, to place before you the witnesses that we have for Jesus, that you may see who they are, what they tell us, and what are the nature and character of their authority. And, first, are there any in the outside pagan nations of the world? If, indeed, the stories that come floating down to us be true, we should expect to find that they would have been heard of in Asia Minor, in Egypt, in Rome, in the distant parts of the great empire that then held the world as one. If, indeed, the earth quaked when the Jesus died, if the rocks were rent and the graves were opened, if the sun itself was darkened in heaven for hours, we should suppose that the curious naturalists and historians and the seekers after strange and wondrous events in the pagan world would have heard and would have reported some of these things. And yet we find nothing of the kind, strange as it may seem. There was Seneca, living not far from these times; and then the Elder and the Younger Pliny, Tacitus, Plutarch, Galen, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, — some of the noblest men of the world. They saw nothing in that little movement over in Palestine that attracted their attention, nothing to call out more than a passing word of contempt. Let me give you some few meagre fragments of testimony that we have, that you may see their nature. One historian writes that "under a ringleader named Chrestus the Jews raised a tumult." In another place, he refers to the Christians as a class of men devoted to a "new and mischievous superstition." And Tacitus speaks of Judea as "the source of this evil," — meaning Christianity. That is the way they looked at that movement which has given us Christendom. Another speaks of the Christians as "a sect hated for their crimes"; and Suetonius gives Nero special praise for having done the most that he could to wipe them off the face of the earth. In a Life of Claudius,

another Roman Emperor, Christ is spoken of as "a restless, seditious, Jewish agitator." Pliny the Younger, writing to the emperor about the year 104, when he was governor of Bithynia, says the Christians do not worship the gods nor the emperors,—as most of the people then did,—nor could they be induced to curse Christ. He says they met mornings for virtuous vows, and chanted a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and in the evening they ate together a common meal,—probably referring to the Lord's supper. And, after he had put them to torture, he said all he could find against them was "a perverse and immoderate superstition." Lucian, about the middle of the second century, speaks of Jesus as the crucified Sophist. These little notices, treating Christianity as just another one of the endless sects that sprung up among a superstitious people, —these are what we find among the great pagan writers of the time. And indeed it is nothing strange. Suppose, for example, to-day a new religion should spring up in Poland. Poland is as important as was Palestine. Poland, like Palestine, is crushed under the heel of an oppressive conqueror. Suppose a new religion should spring up there: would the authorities, the great and wise men in Russia to-day, pay any attention to it? It would be looked on simply as we regard a curious superstition on the part of a people for whom we have nothing but contempt.

Leave the pagan world now, and let us come to the Jewish, outside of the Christian records, and see if we can find anything there. In the Talmud, a perfect wilderness and jungle of religious and political speculations and comments, we find curious, spiteful, distorted, malignant pictures of Jesus. He is represented as a magician, as a person who went into Egypt and learned sorcery and the black art, and by its influence raised a tumult among the people,

and led away a party of deluded followers. This is the picture which his enemies among the Jews have left.

Come now to the two Jews that we should suppose would have something to say about Jesus. Philo was born about twenty years before him. He was the most celebrated of all the Jewish philosophers, and spent his life at the centre of learning at that time, in Alexandria. He devoted his years to the development of the philosophical ideas of his age, trying to reconcile between the Old Testament and the Platonism of his time. We should have supposed that Jesus and a life like his would have attracted the notice of Philo. And yet, though his life covered the whole period of the existence of both John the Baptist and Jesus, there is no single word from beginning to end in all his writings that would lead us to suppose that he ever heard of the existence of either. Josephus, the great Jewish historian, was born about two years after the crucifixion. He lived until after the destruction of Jerusalem, and wrote a history of the Jews elaborately from first to last. In his works, as they have come down to us, there are only two passages that even pretend to refer to Jesus. One of these is certainly an interpolation, and the other one has almost as certainly been tampered with and changed; so that, practically, Josephus does nothing more than merely recognize the existence of a man named Jesus.

Let us come now still closer, toward the inner circle, to the age of the post-Apostolic traditions, and what do we find here? We discover a volume called the Apocryphal New Testament,— a collection of writings that sprung up like a rank growth of weeds in the later ages of the Apostolic tradition. These books are worthy of our attention only as illustrating what sort of stories common people at that time were capable of accepting as true,— weird, wild, fanciful,

grotesque, extravagant. For example, they tell us a story of Jesus: of how, when a young man, he worked as a carpenter with his father. Joseph had manufactured a throne for the king; and, the throne being too small to fit into the place designed for it, Jesus grasps it with his hands, and stretches it to the proper dimensions. They tell us another story of how Jesus as a little boy becomes angry with one of his playmates, and strikes him dead. Another story still. Playing one day with the other boys in the streets of Nazareth, they were making little sparrows and birds out of clay; and while they were discussing what they would do with them, Jesus suddenly claps his hands, and the birds he had made fly away in the air. I refer to these things as simply illustrating the kind of stories that would spring up in an age like this,—credulous, superstitious, ready for any wonder, questioning nothing, but believing things perhaps all the more because they were strange and unheard of.

Take one step further up the ages and nearer to Jesus. We come to the broken fragments of traditions and gospels that now no longer exist. We find, for example, such stories as this: that, during the time when Jesus was baptized, the Jordan itself was on fire; this story evidently springing out of the saying that Jesus was to baptize "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." We find also Jesus himself represented as saying that the Holy Ghost personified was his mother,—not Mary, but the Holy Ghost his mother,— and this mother taking him by a single hair of his head, and carrying him miraculously through the air, and setting him on the summit of Mount Tabor. I speak of this again, simply to show the stories then in circulation, and how readily all sorts of wondrous things could gain currency and get written down in the books of the time.

Leaving these, let us step into the New Testament days,

and see what we find there. I have now given you, so far as I know, specimens of every kind of reference to Jesus outside of the New Testament that we have in the ancient world. In the New Testament itself, then, what do we find? I will speak first of Paul; and yet by doing so I reverse the natural order of time that I have been following, for Paul is the very earliest witness we have for Jesus in the New Testament. His Epistles were written years and years before the Gospels; so that, if you want to find that part of the New Testament which comes nearest to Jesus, you must not go to the Gospels, but read the Epistles of Paul,—the first to the Thessalonians, the two to the Corinthians, that to the Galatians and the one to the Romans. What do we find here? Strange as it may seem to us, it is yet true that we really find nothing peculiar as bearing on the personal history of Jesus. That is, Jesus, in the mind of Paul, seems to have been little else than an ideal. Paul appears to care almost nothing for the human life and the human history of Jesus. He tells us nothing about him except that he describes the supper. We only find that he saw Jesus in a vision years after the crucifixion. How much does this mean? Some one has said that, when a man says he has seen God in a dream, all that it can rationally mean is that he has dreamed that he saw God. When Paul tells us that he saw Jesus in a vision, and this after Jesus was dead and had been dead for years, of course we cannot take it as testimony in the same sense in which we would if Paul had been acquainted with Jesus in his earthly ordinary life, and had told us where he lived, how he lived, what he said, where he went, and what he did.

Leaving then the testimony of Paul, we come to the Gospels. And this of course is the most important part of it all. And I wish to be just as clear and simple as I can in telling you how the Gospels have come into our hands, how

they grew up, and what is the nature of their authority. You must bear in mind first, then, that Jesus himself has left in the world not one word of his own composition. Neither is there any record of his ever having commissioned or asked any one else to write anything about him. Jesus lived and died, and there was nothing written to be a record of his wonderful life. And years passed away before there was anything; for at the first, as we see on the surface of the New Testament and all through, the disciples expected Jesus to return in the clouds almost any day, any week, any year. Why, then, should they sit down and write records of him? But the years passed away, and there was no "sign of the Son of Man" in the heavens; and then the disciples began to think of keeping a record of that wondrous life that they had known and had learned so to love and revere. And the first thing that came into existence were brief notes, memorabilia, written by this one and that; one writing down something about this part of his life, another about that part. One perhaps remembered and wrote down a fragment of the Sermon on the Mount; another, the words of his prayer; another, something else that he said; this one remembering a parable, and another some striking sententious utterance,—the rebuke of the Pharisees perhaps. And by and by these drifted naturally together, and gave us the nucleus of our present records of Jesus. The first Gospel that came into its present shape was that of Mark. And you will notice one strange thing about that. There is no account in it at all of any miraculous birth. The last part of the last chapter is the addition of a later hand; so that in the genuine Mark, the oldest Gospel we have, there is also no account of any bodily resurrection or ascension. All these wonders preceding and following the life are absent in the oldest traditions. The next Gospel of our present four to make its appearance

is that of Matthew. Here we find the wonders occurring upon the birth of Jesus, and an account of his resurrection. After that comes Luke. And the marvels attending both the advent and the departure have wonderfully increased and grown, until in Luke we have the full-grown story of the annunciation, the appearance of the angels, the song in heaven, the wise men, the star,— all the miraculous things said to have preceded his coming; and then an elaborate record of his walks and talks with his disciples after the resurrection, and of the ascent into heaven. These Gospels were brought together in their present shape by unknown authors as late as eighty or one hundred years after the birth of Jesus. Thirty or fifty years later still came the Gospel of John,— not so much a story of the life of Jesus as a theological treatise; a wonderful poem, setting forth a spiritualized, ideal conception of him who had grown to be no longer Jesus of Nazareth, but the eternal Word of the eternal God.

These four Gospels are by no means the only ones that had been written. There are many traces of others, and Luke himself refers to "many" who had been engaged in the work of gospel-making. But about 200 A.D. we find only our four received as authority. And so fixed had the idea of this number become, that Irenæus thinks it impossible that they should be either more or less. The reasons he gives for this opinion are indeed curious enough, and throw strong light on the credulous and fanciful character of the age. He thinks that, as there are four winds and four quarters of the heavens, and as the cherubim were quadriform, so of necessity the number of Gospels must be four.

The Gospels, then, as we have them, you must think of not as composed by the men whose names are attached to them, but as gradual growths, taking their shape as the result of the

work of many hands, and being in their finished condition almost as far away from the time of Jesus as we are from the time of Pope and Dryden. Suppose, for example, that the life of Alexander Pope had never been written until to-day; that only stories and traditions about him had been gathered up by one and another, collected, written down, and at last put into shape one hundred or one hundred and fifty years after his time. Of course, we can see that we could not attach to stories like these anything in the nature of infallibility. It is obviously absurd to suppose that we can be so certain of words and texts as to build on them eternal and infallible dogmas. And yet we do have, as I believe, a veritable picture of Jesus of Nazareth. We can gather out of all the Gospels those traditional deeds and sayings which are common to them all, and thus have a well-nigh indubitable picture. For this old common tradition, which none of them feel at liberty to alter, must contain the things which are oldest and which all believed to be true; and thus it has the highest degree of authority that it is now possible for us to find. We thus have a tradition in its main features almost certainly true, and on which we can rest. And this tradition, which is common to them all, keeps all that is precious, all that is sacred, all that is human, all that is in the truest and noblest sense divine. We have in this common tradition an account of this wonderful man,—his life, his preaching, his patience, his love, his tenderness, his self-sacrificing devotion, and his undying faith in God.*

Now let me just sum up in a few brief words the results in one direction of this discussion. We do not know how long Jesus lived; for one Gospel seems to teach that his public life was about three years, and the other three that it was only

*This is not the result of liberal criticism only, but is admitted by many of the best Orthodox critics as well.

one. We do not certainly know the year in which he was born, much less the month or the day of the month. We do not know the order of events in his career nor the chronological arrangement of his teachings. But we do know that Jesus lived ; we do know that he became a fountain of life and inspiration to the world. Does the condition of the records inflict upon us any great or irreparable loss ? It seems to me that it brings, rather, unspeakable gain. Let me tell you why I believe so.

There are immense critical difficulties that face us the moment we talk about the Gospels as infallible and inspired. Infallible, inspired books could not possibly contradict each other, as these Gospels do. They disagree in regard to the length of the ministry of Jesus, in regard to the day of his crucifixion, and a whole host of important as well as of unimportant details. The moment we regard the Gospels as a natural human growth, these critical difficulties dissolve like mist and are nowhere to be found. But they face us, and will face us, and will not down, if we speak of the Gospels as infallibly inspired. For why could not the Holy Spirit of God have inspired the different writers into a practical agreement with each other, so as, at least, to have obviated flat contradictions ?

And not only critical difficulties : there are also moral difficulties,— as, for example, in regard to the character of God ; in regard to the belief of Jesus in a personal devil, in an eternal hell, in the existence of demons in all the air, and that possessed the bodies and souls of men ; in regard to his ignorance, who at the same time is asserted by the church to be infallible and divine ; in regard to his cruel pictures of the exclusiveness and the wrath of God. These moral difficulties are dissipated the moment we regard the Gospels as the natural and inevitable growth of a special mental and moral condition of a particular age.

And then we are freed from that horrible bondage which has held Christendom in its gripe for a thousand years. If these words are all of them infallibly inspired, then the mighty dogmatism, the power of the Church that holds men as in a vice, and will not let them breathe freely nor judge freely nor move freely, nor dare to hope beyond the limitations of the letter,—this hard dogmatism remains. It is this dogmatism that is forbidding the world to think, forbidding it to learn, forbidding it to grow, that has held men down under the heel of tyrants, that has been made the excuse for holding slaves, that has been made the reason for tyrannies and wrongs innumerable. If all these utterances prove absolute and infallible, the very Word of God, then those things that we dare now to think of as they are,—mistakes and limitations of human opinions,—become welded and hardened into chains to bind the world forever. We are freed, then, by this natural growth of the Gospels, from this bondage of texts.

But, then, what do we lose? These Gospels, the most wondrous books in the world,—no matter who wrote them, no matter when they were written, no matter where,—we have them: we have them in our hands,—marvellous pictures of a marvellous life, deathless words of power and beauty. What matters it who penned them, or when or where? Would not *Hamlet* be as wonderful if Shakespeare were proved not to be the author? Would not the Apollo Belvidere be as marvellous and masterful a work of art without any knowledge of him whose almost divine chisel shaped the marble into beauty? What matters it? There is that divine ideal of the divinest man of the world, no matter whose pencil outlined it. Here are those wonderful sayings, no matter who gave them utterance. We have, then, the deathless ideal of a wondrous humanity. We have the picture of

the love of God ; we have the heroic self-sacrifice ; we have the tender pity, we have the stainless purity, we have the beautiful Jesus of Nazareth to love, to honor, to worship still,—and all this, as I said, freed from the dogmatism and the blots and the defects ; for we may let these melt away as mists that hide a mountain summit, leaving only the perfect outline of the ideal beauty. And we are freed from the necessity of believing that the same loving soul who drew such perfect pictures of our Father in heaven, who painted the vivid parable, who coined the beautiful simile, uttered the tender pity, the forgiveness, and the love,—that he, as God, made also, and made to be eternal, the blots and the contradictions and the devil worship and the devil possession, and the hells and the wails and the despairs. I say the natural growth of these wondrous Gospels frees us from this horrible necessity, and gives us Jesus in all his wonderful beauty, our elder brother, the inspiring, lifting, leading Son of God.

THE MIRACULOUS.

THOSE who are best fitted to pass an opinion upon the subject tell us that man has inhabited the earth, at the very least, one hundred thousand years, and that the probabilities are that those figures ought to be extended to two hundred thousand. If we take the smaller of the two numbers, and say that man has lived here one hundred thousand years, we must assign, at least, ninety-five out of the one hundred thousand to the period of savagery and barbarism, leaving not more than five thousand to cover the entire period of civilization. This fact I wish you to bear clearly in mind, because it will have important meaning for us in our present discussion. Ninety-five or ninety-seven and one-half per cent. of the entire period of human life on earth must be assigned to barbarism and savagery, leaving only five or two and one-half per cent. for civilization. And we must remember further that, so far as a great majority of races are concerned, they have not yet risen out of barbarism at all. Civilization is still the fortunate prerogative of a few favored peoples. And, further still, we must remember that, even in those nations that we call civilized, the men and women that are really entitled to the name are comparatively few. The masses of Christendom still, so far as their thoughts and habits are concerned, are characterized by those peculiarities

which distinguish the barbaric peoples. And yet, in spite of these far-reaching facts, we are accustomed to think that the man who questions the religious opinions of the past is a little presumptuous, and must, at any rate, give strong reasons for the ground which he takes, and all the while we know that in every other direction the early-world beliefs were wrong, and have to be corrected by modern study.

If, indeed, it were true that man started only a few thousand years ago but a little lower than the angels,— perfect in brain, perfect in body, perfect in heart, perfect in character,— then indeed, if we could gather up only some broken fragments of tradition concerning what such a man as that thought and believed and felt, even they would be invaluable to us. We should place upon them a higher estimate than we assign to the best-authenticated opinions of the kind of men, fallible and feeble, that live around us and with which we are acquainted. But we know perfectly well that this glorious dream of a perfect man, as the source of the present humanity of which we are a part, is only a dream; and that, instead of starting perfect up near the angels and falling to his present level, he started, very imperfect, away down near the brutes, and has slowly, through these thousands and thousands of years, climbed up to his present position, which is higher than he has ever seen before.

Now what does it mean that almost the entire life of the race, thus far, has been characterized by what we call savagery and barbarism, and that comparatively only a little brief fragment of time has been witness to the civilization of the leading thinkers of a few favored races? Why, it means simply that the world as yet has been in its childhood; that, instead of being old, man as yet on earth has hardly passed through the first flush of his youth. The full-grown manhood of thought and feeling and life and civilization the world has not entered upon yet: it is all before us.

What, now, are the characteristics of childhood? We need not make any very profound investigation. The children are all about us, and we can study them every day. The characteristics of childhood, so far as I care to call your attention to them this morning, are two: the predominance of feeling over judgment; and the predominance of fancy, of credulity, over reason. Feeling and fancy, passion and imagination highly developed, and reason just budded, not come to blossom or fruitage at all,— these characterize the childhood condition more clearly than anything else. The child lives in a fancy world. It has been one of the enjoyments of my life, since I had children around my feet, to watch the curious play and development of this fancy, this imagination; how, for hour after hour, they create themselves a world utterly unlike the reality in which I live, though I be in the same room with them. They endow with life the dolls and the chairs and the sofas. To them it is perfectly natural, when I read to them out of Æsop's Fables, that bears and birds should talk, that all sorts of curious and supernatural things should happen. This weird, fancy world seems as natural to them as my world of thought does to me. Now we find precisely these same things characterizing the childhood period of the world. All nations have passed through it, if, indeed, they are not in it still. A large part of the world has not yet emerged from it; and, even in those nations that we call civilized, the great majority of people are hardly out of it yet. Reason, judgment,— these are not developed. They live in a strange, weird, fantastic world. This childhood period knows nothing about law, knows nothing of what we mean by the word "nature," of the relation between cause and effect, of the order that science has discovered, of the manifestation of any power except it be a *quasi* human power. And the heavens above and the earth

beneath are one strange creation of fancy, as weird a world as that which Shakespeare has given us in the pages of his "Midsummer-Night's Dream." The sun is a god, the stars are gods. There are spirits of the earth, spirits of the air, spirits of the water, wood nymphs, undines, nixies, gnomes, elves, fairies, angels, devils,—the whole universe one wild, strange scene of fancy and phantasm. But nothing happens in this world in which the childhood of humanity has been passed,—nothing happens by law or order: everything is the result of the caprice or fancy of some of these strange beings that work their will unhindered. When a man dies among barbarous people, they never think of looking for any natural cause: the question is, "Who bewitched him? What evil spirit put him to death?" This is universal. When anything happens, it never occurs to them to look for any natural cause and effect, but some spirit, some angel, some demon, some god, has done it: anything but a natural cause is assigned. There is no question of what is probable or improbable, because you will very readily see that, in a world where there are no order and no laws, one thing is just as probable as anything else · so there is no room to ask any such question.

The other characteristic of childhood, that I spoke of, is its simple faith, its credulity, as we call it. It never occurs to a child at first, until it has learned by experience, that men can tell the things that are not true. It never occurs to a child at first to doubt, to ask for proof, to question whether a thing is so. It is enough for him, no matter how strange a thing may be, to assert, "My father said so," "My mother said so," "My teacher asserted such a thing to be true." As illustrating this characteristic better than any bare assertion, I was told, by a gentleman connected with this congregation, that when his boy was small he was ac-

customed to have a little gathering of his family and friends at his house on Christmas eve, and to have a Christmas tree for the children; and he always used to personate Santa Claus. He came down the back stairs, and through by some back way behind a curtain suddenly into the parlor; and the children never suspected it was their own father who was personating this supernatural visitor; and when, after distributing the gifts, he disappeared behind the curtain, hurried up the back stairs, and came down again in his usual dress, looking like the smiling, loving, happy father that he was, it was very common for him to find the children in the back room on their knees by the grate, looking up the chimney, to see where Santa Claus had gone. And it never occurred to them to question whether the flue was large enough to take him and his pack,— no question, no doubt, no reasoning, nothing of the sort. It was enough that they believed that Santa Claus had come by the chimney, and had departed by the same way he came. This, again, we find to be one of the predominant, prevailing characteristics of the childhood condition of the world: never a doubt, never a question, never an asking for proof, but the simple acceptance of any wonder, no matter how strange. It only needs the most superficial reading of the past history of the world to illustrate how universally true this is.

And all religions have done all they could to increase and intensify this condition. Since ecclesiastical power rests on the belief of the people, absolute credulity, miscalled faith, has been preached as the highest of all virtues; and doubt, or a demand for proof, has been stigmatized as the deadliest of sins. But, in the eyes of a reasonable manhood, this pseudo-faith is not a virtue, but a sin,— a sin against man and a sin against truth.

I said the idea of natural law, of natural causation, is very

modern. The Fathers who lived after the time of Christ taught and believed implicitly that the stars were gods or angels; and Anaxagoras, an old Greek philosopher who lived at the time of Pericles at Athens, was sentenced to death — which sentence was afterwards commuted to perpetual banishment — because he taught that the sun was a ball of fire, and not a divine being. And even down to so late a time as Kepler, just preceding the Newtonian theory of gravitation, Kepler himself, the foremost intellect and astronomer of his time, believed that there was no other way of explaining the order of the starry movements in the sky except on the supposition that an angel inhabited, controlled, and guided each planet and each system in its course. I speak of this to illustrate how very modern this conception of law and order in the universe is. I need not detail to you the steps by which the world has advanced through the belief in the curative properties of the relics and the bones of saints, through the belief in witchcraft, through the belief in the king's power to cure scrofula by his touch, to this modern age wherein we look upon everything from so rationalistic a standpoint. As illustrating, however, how the story of a modern miracle is received, I wish to read you an extract. It is from the New York *Nation* for March 25, and it will explain itself: —

The gloom of the famine appears likely to be lighted a good deal in Ireland by miracles, which are now exciting great sensation among the Catholics, both lay and clerical. Unhappily, however, there seems to be nothing "practical" about them, and they promise no addition to the stores of food and clothing. Considering how many miracles have been worked during the last ten years in France and Belgium, it is somewhat surprising that Ireland, whose faith is much more lively than that of either of those countries, should have gone so long without even one or two. As usual, the new miracle was first perceived by a poor woman, in the shape of an apparition of the Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. John close to a Catho-

lic Church. Other women and children rapidly began to see it, too; then the housekeeper of an archdeacon saw it; and then the archdeacon himself saw it, or something very like it. As soon as the fame of it got abroad, cripples and diseased persons began to come in in great numbers to get the benefit of it; and now the restoration of sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, walking to the lame, by merely sitting round the church or in contact with it, has occurred so frequently that the individual cases have ceased to be reported. The clergy have not as yet pronounced authoritatively on the wonder; but they have not repudiated it, and it would seem to make little difference what they say in the presence of the cures effected by it. Not the least interesting feature in the modern Catholic miracles is that, however well authenticated, they never convert a sceptic or a Protestant. Nobody pays the slightest attention to them except persons who were fully prepared for such things beforehand.

I have read this as illustrating the spirit with which the world to-day receives the report of a miracle, no matter how well authenticated it may be. Now let us see if we can understand and explain this. Why is it that we have come into this sceptical attitude of mind? One principal reason is this: we have discovered that the universe, so far as we can investigate and explore, is a scene of natural law; that is, that there is order everywhere. We have found this, I say, in every place where we have been able to bring the matter to a test; and the inference seems to follow with almost irresistible force, that, if we have not yet discovered it everywhere, it is simply because we have not completed our investigations. That is, it means, if I translate it into theological language, that we have discovered that the ordinary method of God's work is a method of order and law, a following of natural causation and consequence; and we believe that this must be his method of working everywhere. Now modern science does not do what by many it is supposed to do. It does not deny the possibility of what is called a miracle. It is simply the embodiment of Anglo-Saxon common-sense. It does not deny a miracle, the possi-

bility of it: it only says, if you make to me an extraordinary assertion, you must present me extraordinary proof. The proof must be equal to the strangeness of the thing that you assert to be true. Now, as a palpable and very simple illustration, let me give you a case of what I mean. If one of you should come to me to-day, and say, "As I was walking up Washington Street, I met a black dog on the sidewalk," it would never occur to me to doubt it, to dispute it, to question about it. I should not ask whether anybody else saw it, whether you were accustomed to tell the truth. I should accept it simply and unquestioningly. Why? Because it is one of the commonest things in the world for people to meet black dogs on Washington Street. There would be nothing strange about it. But if you should go on further, and assert, "While I was looking at this black dog, he suddenly grew a pair of wings and flew over a five-story block of buildings," should I accept that unquestioningly? Of course not. And why? Because that is a very strange thing, a very unusual thing,—so unusual that you would feel I would be justified in saying that nobody ever saw such a thing as that happen in the world. I should want a good deal of proof before believing it. It would not necessarily follow that I should charge you with purposed and intentional falsehood. I might say: "Perhaps you are mistaken. It may have been something else that was black, that was born with wings, that you saw rise up and fly from the sidewalk over the block of buildings. Perhaps it was not a dog at all. You may have been mistaken." If you asserted still that it was, I should think possibly that something might be the matter with your brain, and I should want a medical investigation. You would say I would be justified in almost anything except believing such a story as that. You would say it would be almost impossible to bring together proof enough to establish it. If five

hundred people on Washington Street should assert that they all saw it, I question whether there is a man in this house to-day who would believe it, who would not question whether it was not intended as an imposition on them, or whether the whole crowd was not taken with a sudden attack of insanity. Anything, almost, you would accept rather than believe it as a literal fact. This, then, is simply what I mean when I say that people demand,— it is a part of their present condition of thought,— they demand an unusual amount of proof before they will believe any unusual thing.

You have all heard, I suppose, about the famous argument of Hume against miracles. And, perhaps, if you simply take up the popular impression about it, and do not know what he said, you may have thought that it was some very dreadful thing on his part. But what was his argument? It was only putting into philosophical language the very argument I have been using to you. He simply said this: It is more likely that men should be deceived, or that they should falsify, than that a miracle should have occurred; it is more in accord, he says, with human experience. And, of course, we all know that, whether a miracle ever did occur or not, this statement of Hume is undoubtedly true. We have experience every day of our lives of people's telling untruths; and it is not a very difficult thing to prove that they are capable of doing that. We also have experience every day of our lives of people's being mistaken, of their misreporting this thing or that or the other that really did occur or that they suppose occurred. We do not need any great amount of proof to make us believe that. And I will venture to say that what is ordinarily meant by the word "miracle" is something that has not come within the range of the experience of any of us. Therefore, we know, from our own experience with men, that Hume's statement is true,— that

it is more likely that a man should tell an untruth or be mistaken than that a miracle should occur. That is Hume's famous argument.

Now let us pass on to consider the condition of things, somewhat at length, in the popular mind. What is the attitude of the Church to-day toward miracles? Only a few years ago, if you should pick up and open a volume of Christian evidences, you would find the miracles placed at the fore-front, as the leading, strongest, and most convincing argument of all that Christianity was something supernatural and divine. What do you find to-day? The miracles, instead of being the strongest argument on which the apologist for Christianity relies, are everywhere confessed to be a difficulty, a burden, something to be apologized for, something to be explained, if possible, in accordance with natural law. A few years ago, I published a little book, in which I attempted to establish the spiritual truth of Christianity on a spiritual basis. A leading professor in an Orthodox Theological Seminary wrote me a letter, saying that, if Christianity was to endure, it must be supported in this way, and not any longer on doubtful external proofs. As a further illustration, let us look at the position of Dr. Furness. You know he is one of the leading liberal men of the present time. He is a firm believer in the actual occurrence of those things that are called miracles in the New Testament. How does he explain them? He does not believe that they were unnatural at all. He does not believe that they contradicted natural law. He simply says: Given a man of the character of Jesus, and miracles for him are just as natural as our ordinary occupations and works are to us. But I cannot possibly see any force in Dr. Furness' argument. Until some one shall explain to me how there is any natural relation between moral goodness and physical power over

physical phenomena, I shall be obliged to regard his argument as only another failure in the way of an apology. Mr. Thomas Hughes, the author of "Tom Brown," has recently published a book called "The Manliness of Christ." He accepts the miracles in the New Testament as true, but asserts particularly that they were not unnatural, that they were in contradiction of no natural law; and he goes so far as to say that any man to-day who could come into such perfect accord with the life and the laws of God as did Jesus would probably be able to perform the same works which he performed in his day. Dr. Abbott, the author of the famous article on the Gospels in the Encyclopædia Britannica,— he also finds these miracles a difficulty, although he is a leading scholar in the Orthodox Church; and he argues them all away on the ground of myth and legend and tradition, and believes that the life of Jesus from the first to the last was a purely natural and simple life. I speak of these as illustrating the attitude of modern churchmen, as compared with that which was taken no more than one hundred years ago.

You are aware of the position of the Catholic Church on this question. It holds that the stream of miraculous movement has never ceased, but has flowed uninterruptedly in the Church from the first day until now. No Protestant, of course, believes this. And yet mark this point. If Jesus said what he is reported to have said in the Gospels,— which I very much doubt,— the Catholic position is the only proper and logical one to hold. For Jesus is reported to have said that miracles shall be one distinguishing characteristic of those that believe in him; and that, after his ascension, not only shall miracles not cease, but that they shall grow in numbers and in importance. For he says of the disciples, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father." This is in flat contradiction to the Protestant

position. As, however, nobody but the Catholics themselves believe in the reality of Catholic miracles, either those in Ireland to-day, or those that recently occurred at Lourdes in France, or those wrought by the bones of Thomas à Becket, or those connected with the life of any other saint in any age, of course I need not stop to discuss them.

Let us pass, then, to the Protestant position. What is that? The Protestants hold that there was an age of miracles, beginning with the birth of Jesus and ending with the death of the last apostle; that all the miracles that are reported to have occurred during that age must be accepted as true; and that then suddenly the miracles ceased, and that none genuine have occurred from that day to this. That is the ordinary Protestant position. Let us now examine it. Is there any reason, then, in the nature of things, or any reason that we can discover, why we should believe in the reality of the miracles of the New Testament, and deny the reality of all others? That is the question we want to look squarely and simply in the face. Let us take this up briefly in its several points.

In the first place, were the Jews a critical people immediately preceding and following the birth of Jesus? Were they a people who would be very likely to be much astonished at miracles, who would look at them very closely, who would demand a good deal of evidence, whose testimony would be such that we could rely upon it? On the other hand, so eminent a scholar as Dr. Lightfoot of England, a leading Orthodox scholar, critic, and commentator, tells us, after studying this whole age, that the Jews at that time — about the time of Jesus — were given over beyond measure to beliefs in all sorts of delusions, exorcisms, amulets, charms, and dreams. Everything strange and wild and unnatural they were engaged in and ready to believe. This is on the

authority of one of the best Orthodox scholars of the world. What does the New Testament itself tell us as to the effect which the miracles produced? Did they astonish the disciples? Did they make any special impression upon them? Why, the writers of the Gospels naïvely and unconsciously confess that they did nothing of the kind. Why should they? The Jews at that time believed not only in the ability of Jesus to work a miracle, or of a prophet to work a miracle, but they believed that devils and demons of every grade could work miracles. They believed that the heathen divinities could work miracles just as well. They had no more doubt of a miracle which occurred in Greece or Asia Minor or Babylon than of one which occurred at Jerusalem. And we find that the Gospel writers, as I have said, unconsciously betray the fact that these miracles made no impression. After the most stupendous miracles, we find the disciples the next day grumbling, murmuring, finding fault, doubting, just as though nothing had ever happend. It seems very strange that there should be no impression produced by such stupendous occurrences. We are not, then, to regard the Jews as specially critical, or as being very careful in regard to wonders. Now, is there any reason in the nature of things why miracles should have come then, and never since that time? None whatever, that I know of. If it is important that men should believe the truth in order that they may be saved, and if it is important that they should be convinced, and if miracles are the most effective way of convincing, I know of no reason in the world why miracles should not occur to-day just as well as eighteen hundred years ago. If they tell us that man is fallen, and a supernatural dispensation is needed to raise him up again, we reply, All intelligent men know that the story of the fall is an Asiatic myth.

Have we any more testimony for the truth of the miracles

in the New Testament than we have for any others? This, friends, is the crucial and important point that I wish to call your special attention to. Have we any better evidence for the New Testament miracles than we have for any others in the history of the world? In fact, we have not one-tenth part of the evidence for any miracle said to have occurred eighteen hundred years ago that we have for the reality of those which I have read to you as having occurred in Ireland within a few weeks. We have not one-tenth part of the evidence for the New Testament miracles that we have for the power of the English kings to cure scrofula; we have not one-tenth part of the evidence that we have of the reality of the Salem witchcraft; we have not one-tenth part of the evidence that we have for the power of Thomas à Becket's bones to cure the sick; we have not one-tenth part of the evidence that we have of other miracles said to have occurred during the life of Augustine, for which he himself vouches. To put this more tersely and strongly still, let me make this statement: you could not convict a man of stealing a jack-knife, you could not imprison him here in Boston one week, without better evidence than we have for the occurrence of any miracle eighteen hundred years ago. The testimony that we have would not even be considered ten minutes by any modern court of justice. What is the simple state of the case? We have not the testimony of one single known eye-witness for any New Testament miracle,—not one. It is only that somebody believed that somebody else saw or heard something strange, somewhere else, at some other time. You must remember here that the Gospels and the Acts, as we have them, are purely anonymous. The nearest we come to proof, the only possible or apparent exception that may be brought up to your mind, is in the case of Paul. He asserts the reality of what he calls "signs and wonders." We have his direct

personal testimony for the occurrence of these signs and wonders. But, when we look at them, what do we find he means? He includes in these signs and wonders his own ecstatic visions,— as in that passage where he says he was "caught up to the third heaven," whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell — and also certain inarticulate babblings, which were called "speaking with tongues," in the early churches ; and some other strange occurrences and phenomena that are easily explained, that nobody would now call miraculous. These are what Paul speaks of as "signs and wonders." So that the statement remains true that I have made,— that we have not the direct testimony of any single person who even claims to be an eye-witness of any miracle that is said to have occurred eighteen hundred years ago.

There are one or two other points that we want to look at. Does this impeach the integrity of the New Testament writers? It is sometimes said, Why, you must believe in all these wonders of the New Testament, or else you must charge the disciples, who were ready to lay down their lives for their opinions, with dishonesty. Nothing is further from the truth. Is not history full of the mistakes of honest men? We do not say that Tacitus told a lie, because he refers to prodigies and wonders, as strange as any mentioned in the Bible, as occurring in connection with the history of the Roman emperors and the Roman armies. We simply believe the ordinary historic statements of Tacitus, and drop these other things, as credulities characteristic of the age. Nobody thinks of questioning his truth. Nobody thinks of questioning the sincerity and honesty of Sir Matthew Hale, that famous judge in England, who condemned so many people as witches. He was honest and sincere in it : he believed it as truly as man ever believed anything. And we know from the history of the world, past and present, that it is not

necessary that a doctrine should be true, in order that men should die for it. We talk about men being selfish ; and yet is it not the commonest thing in the history of the world to see men dying for their opinions? And it does not at all follow that the opinion must therefore be true : it only follows that they must have believed it to be true. Does it touch the honesty of these men, then, or their integrity? Not at all. They were honest, earnest, faithful, noble, and they taught that which they believed,— not only what they believed, but what everybody believed at that time.

There is another difficulty which is frequently brought up. I want to pass these points in review rapidly, so as to cover, to your thought, all the difficulties. They tell us that there was not time after the death of Jesus for these wondrous stories to grow up and be believed before the Gospels were written. They say it must have taken a very long time for people to have come to believe such things. But the person who makes this objection must have thought and observed very little. How long does it take for a myth or a legend or a story to grow? Why, sometimes it takes twenty-four hours,— sometimes not so long as that,— sometimes a week. I have seen,— in the five years in which I have been in Boston,— I have seen the birth and development of very large numbers of wonder-stories and myths and legends ; things utterly baseless and without foundation, things that only a few years ago would have been accepted as well-accredited miracles. Let me give you an illustration of what I mean, because something concrete is more effective than generalized statement. Only two or three years ago, I heard a lady, of ordinary intelligence and of undoubted veracity, telling a lot of her friends, inside of a week after the supposed event occurred, of some strange, wonderful thing that she said happened at the other side of the room,

when she was sitting in absolute midnight darkness and could neither see nor touch it. I happened to be sitting beside her at the time. Nothing of the sort that she was telling about occurred. She had no reason to suppose that it occurred, except in her own imagination; and, if it had occurred, there was no possible way of her knowing it. And yet she did not tell it with any *if* or *but* or question, but asserted is as simple truth. It was no less a statement than that a piano, on the other side of the room from which she was sitting, lifted itself a foot or two from the floor, and came down again, and did it several times; and this, I say, in a room so dark that you could not see your finger an inch from your face. When people are in this state of mind, does it take a great while for legends, myths, and stories to grow?

Two or three years ago, I attended a funeral in this city. The appearance of the body was strange. It was that of a very elderly lady, and yet the face was smooth and without a wrinkle and looked wondrously youthful; still, to any one who was at all acquainted with these things, it was nothing so very unusual. But the friends remarked it as something wonderful, and they talked about the wonder; and within three days after I saw it grown into a marvellous story, half-bordering on a miracle, in one of our daily papers. There is hardly a week passes that I do not learn some wondrous thing that I have said or done within the last month, that I never heard of before. I hear it on unimpeachable authority, evidence that it is almost impossible for me to doubt. As a concrete and curious example of it, let me tell you something that many of you, at any rate, will recognize. Only a little while ago, a detailed story went the rounds of all the Boston papers — and I know not how much farther — concerning Dr. Bartol and my little girl, — of his calling on me, and the wonderful report that was given of

his appearance. It was on the authority of one of the leading poetesses of America, and not the slightest question or doubt was hinted concerning it. The story, then, rested on unimpeachable evidence; and yet, until I read it in the paper, I had never heard of it. Only a little while ago, as another illustration, I heard a perfectly well-authenticated story of one of my brother ministers and his wife, here in the city. It was of something that he had done on a public occasion where there were hundreds of people to see. I heard that some of his parish were considerably troubled about it, did not altogether like it, thought it might possibly lead to trouble,— another story, well-authenticated, full-grown, perfectly developed. I found out afterward that nothing of the sort ever happened,— not the slightest foundation for it anywhere. People right in the midst of facts like these talking about there not being time for stories to grow! In a state of mind where such things as these are easily believed, they grow up on every hand, just as naturally as witchgrass grows in a New England cornfield. This question, then, is not an important one; and it is not worth our while that we should go into any very elaborate discussion of it.

One point more I must touch. They tell us that, if we take the miracles out of the New Testament, we must lose the person of Jesus, because he is so entangled and involved in these miraculous stories that it is impossible to take them away without taking him away also, and losing his life and power out of the world. Let us look at this just a moment. It was impossible in the state to which criticism had advanced, perhaps, fifty years ago; but it is not impossible now. For this same Dr. Abbott, of whom I have already spoken, one of the leading Orthodox scholars of the world, has actually accomplished that which they have been telling us is impossible. He has disentangled from the Gospels —

in the original tradition, which he calls "the triple tradition" —the story of Jesus' life, in which the writers of the Gospels, Mark, Matthew, and Luke, all three perfectly agree. And, when we get to that life, what do we find? We find hardly more than the simple man Jesus. What few miracles are left are the ones that would most naturally spring up first, very simple in their nature and origin, and very easily explained. So that we find Jesus already disentangled from the miracles, and restored to us as a simple, natural, human life. And, friends, to my mind this is a great gain. They tell us we shall lose Jesus, if the miracles are taken out of the Gospels. But, to my mind, this, as it bears on the person of Jesus, is not loss, but discovery. He now becomes our brother in very truth; not in any incomprehensible, weird, wild, strange, unaccountable way, but in very truth our brother. It was our brother, a simple man, that could have such grand faith in God, that could have such grand faith in his fellow-men, that could tell the truth so fearlessly in the face of the direst opposition, who could go unflinchingly to the cross, who could give us this perfect picture and ideal of a wondrous life? But Jesus, as they have given him to us in the unauthorized and fanciful dogmas of the Church,—what is he? He is a being neither God nor man; an incomprehensible, strange creature; a person who was ignorant as a man, omniscient as a God; who could get tired and suffer on one side of his being, who could neither weary nor feel the touch of pain on the other side; who had two wills, a human and a divine; two natures, the human and the divine; who could go through what looks like only a sham and pretence of suffering. For where is sacrifice, where is humiliation, where is the power of sorrow and pain to a God who just temporarily clothes himself with the human form, who knows all the time the issue, who simply goes through a little temporary trial of

a year or a year and a half, and by it earns the eternal acclaim and glory of the universe? To talk about the suffering, self-sacrifice, or humiliation or self-denial of a life like that, seems to me to use words without any meaning. But if my brother man, a real man and only a man, could do all this, then he becomes sublime, a man I can worship, a man I can look up to, and let him teach and inspire and lead me.

And, then, in regard to the bearing of this subject on the progress of civilization. If you will notice one thing, and trace it throughout the whole course of human history, you will find this to be true. The entire progress of man on earth has gone along, step by step, with the decay of belief in the supernatural. That is, during the period of utter savagery and barbarism, there was nothing else but the supernatural. At the very first dawn of civilization, there began to be questions of possible and probable, and the rejection of this, that, and the other thing,— as we see in the case of Anaxagoras,— as inconsistent with facts; and so the growth of modern science. And do you not see how it must be true? Why should men exert themselves to civilize the world and lift it up, if it is liable to be done all at once in a minute by a miracle? Thus the first Christian ages argued and expected. Take it in the progress of medicine. Why should men investigate the nature of the human body, study diseases, and learn their phases, so that they can alleviate human suffering and sorrow, if you can do it all in five minutes by a prayer? Until men cease to believe that they can do these things by magic, modern civilization gains no foothold on the earth. If they are able to work miracles in Ireland to-day, if the Virgin Mary pities them so that she comes down from heaven to love and sorrow for them, if St. John and St. Joseph can come and play hide-and-seek in an old cathedral, why can they not keep men from starving?

Until, I say, men believe that they, in accordance with the natural laws of God, must work out civilization, civilization is never born. The progress of the world, then, in every department,—as I could show you, if I had time,—has kept pace, step by step, with the discovery and the belief in natural causation, in scientific order.

And then once more, and my last thought. The tone of the civilized world's thought is rapidly changing concerning that which is really wonderful and sublime. It used to be thought that the only way for a god to manifest his majesty was by some weird, unheard-of, unnatural display; he must do something that nature never thought of doing, in order to manifest a divine presence. It is in accord with the spirit of modern science and the modern civilized thought of the world to say, God reveals himself most majestically and grandly in all those things that are natural and orderly. He who understands the mystery, the infinity of wonder there is in a drop of water, no longer stops to marvel over stories of water being turned into wine. He who understands, as the botanist does, the infinite mystery of the growth and budding and blossoming of the flower, no longer wonders over old, childish stories of goddesses that passed over the earth and left flowers in their tracks. He who understands the dull glow or the burning flame of the October leaves no longer stops to find God and his mystery and majesty in the fabled burning bush that was not consumed. He who understands the infinite mystery, marvel, and wonder of a waving field of grain, no longer looks for God as one who multiplies a few loaves into food enough for a crowd. The marvel, the wonder, the mystery of the world,—have they gone away with miracles? Nay: every step of science only brings us nearer and nearer, face to face, with the infinite awe and the infinite mystery of the living God. The light of

the stars as they keep on in their eternal courses, not wandering hither and thither through the heavens, to guide bewildered magicians as they are hunting after the birth of a child ; the comets, whose law now can be read so that we can tell how many hundreds of years ago they were here and how many hundreds of years hence they will appear again,— are no longer supposed to be portents to give warning of the coronation, the sickness, or death of selfish or brutal and foolish kings. God's majesty of might among the stars moves on. His wonder in their brightness, his wonder in the growing of the grass beneath our feet, his wonder in the eternal beat and laughter of the sea, his wonder in the sculpturing and carving of the mountains, his wonder in marking out the watercourses of the earth,— the wonder of God everywhere, as modern science is revealing it, is giving us a conception of infinitude and majesty and glory, beside which all the poor tricks of legerdemain, which are connected with the myths of the past, seem contemptible and poor. As Lowell tells it in his " Parable," a prophet who goes to the mountain in search of a sign from God, on his return, meets his little daughter with an equal sign and wonder in her hand, which, as he says,

> " Beside my very threshold,
> She had plucked and brought to me."

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

If I should confine myself strictly to the few things that are absolutely known, I might sum up my morning's discourse in two or three brief phrases. All that we really know about the birth and childhood of Jesus is, first, that he was born; secondly, that he had a childhood; thirdly, that out of this birth and childhood there came a wondrous manhood. But on the basis of slight indications and stories and traditions there has grown up such a stupendous, unnatural, incredible superstructure of dogma that it seems necessary for us, if we will find out what Jesus really was, that we make some particular and careful investigation of these stories and of their origin. I ask you, then, not to think of me as simply critical, fault-finding, picking to pieces this passage of Scripture or that, but rather as endeavoring to find the real Jesus. I will, if I can, strike out a road through the jungle and thick undergrowth of superstition and myth and legend, if by any means we may find a path, so that we may come to the cradle of the real child of Joseph and Mary, and find out that he is not some monstrous birth, separated from us so that we can never really know or understand him, but that he is our brother, and may be our teacher, our inspirer and friend. That we may perform this work, it will be necessary for me, as I said, carefully and critically to review the stories that

are told about his birth, that we may see whether they agree together, out of what they have probably sprung, and how much reliance may be placed upon them as actual history. I believe we shall find them to be not historic, but legendary; not reality, but poetry. And when, by and by, the mind of the nineteenth century has learned to think of them as they are, as beautiful developments of the loving and adoring imagination of Jesus' friends and followers, we shall then be able to read them simply, as we cannot now, without being troubled by the supernatural in them, any more than to-day we are troubled in reading the myths of Greece or Rome; any more than we are troubled about the story of Hercules strangling the serpents in his cradle, or the story of Minerva springing full-grown and full-armed, with helmet, shield, and spear, from the brow of her father Jove.

Let us, then, look at the tales that the gospel narrators tell. We can dispose of John in a word. If you will take the Gospel of John and read it through carefully with this one thought in mind, you will find that throughout its pages Jesus is not treated as a man. You may not be persuaded that he is treated as the equal of the omnipotent God, but he is at least superhuman, a demigod. John was written, as I have already told you, toward the last of the second century; and by this time the Hebrew Jesus was lost in the growth of Greek philosophy and pagan myth. So John, wishing to carry out this idea of keeping Jesus separate from and above humanity, makes no reference whatever to his having had any human origin. But, apparently by accident, he reveals to us what was the original and universal tradition, when he makes Nathaniel ask Philip, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

At the other end of this scale stands the Gospel of Mark. This represents the oldest, the original tradition of all. And

here we find Jesus not superhuman, not a demigod, but a simple man, the prophet of Nazareth. But this Gospel of Mark, or the tradition it represents, had come into existence before the wonder-stories connected with his birth had hardened into belief. So there is no trace of any appearance of angels, of any supernatural birth, of anything wonderful about his origin in any way whatever. He is treated simply as the son of Joseph and Mary; and it is said that, when he comes to John for baptism, he comes from his home in Nazareth.

Many years after this tradition had taken shape, the Gospel of Matthew was written. Many years after Matthew, the Gospel of Luke was written. And in these two we find the tradition partly grown in Matthew, and still more largely developed in Luke. And if we find, as we go along, that it is impossible for us to reconcile the conflicting accounts of Luke and Matthew, we need not be troubled by it at all; for, when Luke wrote his Gospel, Matthew's was one among those "many" that he refers to in his introduction: it had not yet taken its place as an authority in the Church, and the writer of Luke would have had no sort of scruple in telling his own story independently, without raising the question as to whether it was or was not consistent with the same story as told by Matthew.

Let us now come to the special points of these stories, refer to them very briefly, and then look at them side by side. In the Gospel of Matthew, we find that the home of Joseph and Mary is represented as having been at Bethlehem,—not Nazareth, but Bethlehem. Here Joseph and Mary are betrothed. And betrothal, you must remember, in the time of Jesus and among the Jews, was practically the same as marriage; only there remained the further ceremony of bringing the bride publicly to her husband's home. Joseph finds that

Mary is to become a mother, and he is represented as suspecting her fidelity. Then he dreams that an angel comes to him, and tells him that the father of the child to be born is the Holy Ghost. Immediately after this there appear the three wise men coming from the far east and led by a star. Curiously enough, in the first instance they are not led to Bethlehem. They are led to Jerusalem, and here they make inquiries in regard to the place where this wondrous child is to be born, until they have aroused the suspicion of Herod. Then the star, which had not led them aright in the first place, appears a second time, and directs their course from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Meantime, Joseph has had another dream, and the angel warns him against the hate of Herod; and he takes the child and its mother and flies into Egypt. Now Herod, enraged because the wise men had not come back and reported to him,—for they also had had a dream, and been warned to return home another way,—sends out his soldiers and puts to death all the male children from two years of age and under in and about the city of Bethlehem. After Herod's death, Joseph dreams again, and the angel tells him that it is safe for him to return to his own land. When he is nearly there, he hears that Archelaus, the son of Herod, is ruling in his stead, and he is afraid to return to Bethlehem; and the angel in another dream appears to him, and he turns northward into Galilee, to the city of Nazareth, and makes that his home. And that is Matthew's explanation of how it comes to pass that Jesus is a Nazarene.

Now let us see what the story is in Luke, passing it over briefly in just this simple way. Here, as I said, we shall find that the wonders are very largely grown. Now it is not an angel coming in a dream, but a veritable angel appearing in person; and he does not come to Joseph now, nor even to Mary in the first instance,—for not only must there be a

supernatural foreshadowing of the birth of Jesus, but there must also be supernatural occurrences connected with the coming of his forerunner, John the Baptist. So that in the first instance the angel appears to Zacharias as he ministers in the temple, and tells him that a wonderful child is to be born and the name by which he is to be called; for he is not to be the Messiah, but the forerunner of the Messiah. And, as Zacharias doubts, the angel strikes him dumb. Judgments always hang over the head of the man who asks for proof. And he is not able to speak again until the time of the naming of the child, when he calls for a tablet, and writes "his name as John." Then his speech returns to him, and he breaks out into a prophetic strain of adoration and praise. Meantime, another angel has appeared, not to Joseph,—as in the account in Matthew,—but to Mary, and announced to her the birth of her child. All this time, in Luke, you must remember, Joseph and Mary are living in Nazareth; for that, according to Luke, was their original home, and not Bethlehem, as in Matthew. After the annunciation of the birth of the wondrous child to Mary, there is no story here of any doubt on the part of Joseph, or of any trouble about the consummation of the marriage. There must be some way of having the supposed prophecy fulfilled, of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem; and so we find that Luke has recourse to a story of there having been a taxing—an enrolment of the people throughout the whole world as he says, by which of course he means the Roman Empire—in the days of Augustus Cæsar. And so, as he tells us, all the Jews were obliged to leave the homes where they were living, and go to the place where their family had originated. And Joseph, being of the lineage of David, takes Mary and goes to Bethlehem,—quite a long journey and a difficult one at this time,—and there finds the place crowded and full,—no

room for them in the caravansary, and the child is born, amid the asses and the camels, in a manger. Meanwhile, angels have appeared to the shepherds. There is no star, no wise men, no Herod, no slaying of the innocents in Luke; but the angels appear; the shepherds hear their song of "Peace on earth, good-will to men," and then they come seeking for the birthplace of the wondrous child. And, after the presentation of the child on the eighth day after its birth in the temple, they return again to their home in Nazareth.

Now let us compare two or three of the points of these different narratives, and see if we can make them seem to us real and veritable history; or whether, as I have said, we must not regard them as the poetic, legendary growth of the loving imagination of the friends and followers of Jesus grown famous. In the first place, you will have noticed that Matthew opens with an account of the genealogy of Joseph. Luke also has a long genealogy. But, if you have ever tried to compare them together, you will see that they contradict each other hopelessly at almost every point: there is no possibility of reconciling them; and then, furthermore, supposing we could reconcile them, they have no bearing whatever on the question, according to the popular belief about Jesus. For, if Jesus was not the son of Joseph, how does it make him of the lineage of David to prove that Joseph was a descendant of David? Of course Joseph's family tree has nothing more to do with it, according to the popular belief, than has yours or mine. Then, as I have already indicated, Luke makes the parents of Jesus live in Nazareth. Matthew makes them live in Bethlehem. We find again that this story of the Holy Spirit having been the father of Jesus could not possibly have sprung up among the Jews; for the word for "spirit" or "ghost" in the Hebrew was a feminine word,

while in the language of the Greeks it was neuter. It might be possible for the Greeks to think of the Holy Ghost or Spirit as being the father of the child, but it could not possibly have occurred to the mind of the Hebrew. And, as illustrating this and bearing upon it,—bearing also upon what must have been felt even then as the difficulty concerning these genealogical tables, — we find another legend, curiously enough, among the fragments of lost and forgotten Gospels, of the Holy Spirit as a goddess having been the mother of Jesus, and Joseph's having been his father. In one of these fragments, Jesus himself is represented as speaking of the Holy Spirit as his mother. We find, then, that these two accounts contradict each other at almost every point, and there is no possibility of reconciling them. You cannot possibly, if you take Matthew and sit down with it, find a place in his account to put in the incidents that Luke says occurred. If, on the other hand, you sit down with Luke, you cannot possibly find a place to put in the stories of Matthew. The two do not go together, and cannot be made to go together.

And then let us glance just for a moment at one way by which some of these stories may have originated in the first place, and at the curious misinterpretation and mistakes of each one of these writers. We find, for example, that Matthew speaks of this virgin birth as having been prophesied by one of the Old Testament writers. If you turn back to that prophecy, you will find that it has no bearing whatever upon the subject. The original word there does not mean a virgin at all, but only a young woman ; and the prophecy is not something that is to occur in the far distant future, but of something that the prophet says particularly shall take place before the child to be born shall have grown large enough to know good from evil. Then in regard to this rising of the star. It was easy enough in those times when

astrology was believed in, when it was supposed that every remarkable occurrence or change in the life of a great man or country or church in the world would naturally be heralded by some wondrous appearance of star or constellation in the heavens,— it was natural enough for them to believe in the guidance of the wise men by a star; but can we to-day soberly take such a narration as simple matter of fact? And then we find the attempt on the part of Matthew— which, by the way, is apparent all through his Gospel from one end to the other — to find in the life of Jesus a fulfilment, not only of every real prophecy, but of every supposed prophecy, in regard to the Messiah. There is the saying in the old writings about a star rising out of Jacob. Of course this star in the original prophecy is only a figurative way of representing the king himself who was to come. But the story had sprung up in the time of Jesus that the Messiah was to be heralded by a star; and, a hundred years after Jesus, the last pretender to the Messiahship took the name of Bar-Cochba, son of a star. And then these three wise men. In one of the stories that we have of them, we learn their names, — Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar. One came from Europe, another from Asia, and another from Africa, — America not being discovered, none comes from there, — to represent the whole world as laying its homage at the feet of the new-born king. They presented gold, because that was a proper gift for a king; frankincense, as a fitting way of paying devotion to a god, — burning incense to him; and myrrh, as a prophecy of the embalming of his body for the burial after his death. And then there is another prophecy. He is made to fly into Egypt, that it might be fulfilled where it is said, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." You look at the original, and you find it has nothing whatever to do with the Messiah, but simply refers to Israel in Egypt, hundreds and hundreds of

years before. This prophecy that is applied to the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem, in the original, refers to the lamentations of Rachel, the mythical mother, when her children are carried away captive into Babylon. The whole story of the destruction of "the innocents" is probably baseless. Josephus, with no love for Herod, tells everything bad about him that he can discover, but makes no mention of this. Furthermore, every mythology has its story of the "Dangerous Child" — like Moses — whose death is sought because his life is to bring revolution or overthrow to the existing order of things. And then he says at the last, "He shall be called a Nazarene," — that there is a prophecy like that. We look at the prophecies all the way through, and we find that he has here quoted something that does not exist in the first place, and that he has misunderstood the word which he makes to read Nazarene. The only thing we can find in the Old Testament that looks like it reads, in the original, Nazarite; and Nazarite has nothing whatever to do with the city of Nazareth, but refers to a person like Samson, who let his hair grow long, drank no wine or strong drink, and was consecrated in a special way and to a particular kind of life. So that here, again, a prophecy is quoted that does not exist, and even the word that does exist is misunderstood and misapplied.

And then, when we come to Luke, just take one more mistake,— I cannot go into details in regard to them all. Luke makes this taxing of the whole world to have taken place at the time of the birth; and he says that Cyrenius, or Quirinus as we should now spell the word, was then governor of Syria. We know from the records of history that Cyrenius was not governor of Syria for ten years after, and that another man was then holding the office. And this taxing — Luke misunderstands entirely the purpose of it.

There was no requirement that people should go to the place where their parents originated. The tax did not even reach as far as Nazareth, but only covered Judea and the region round about; and the tax itself did not occur for ten years after the birth of Jesus.

These are some of the reasons why we cannot look at these narratives as historic fact. Now let us look a little further. If Jesus was born in this wondrous fashion, is it not a little strange that there is no sort of reference to it anywhere else in the Gospels,— nowhere else in the New Testament except in the opening words of these two Gospels. Mark never has heard of it; John takes no notice of it; Paul does not refer to it anywhere; Peter does not speak of it; John, in writing the Book of Revelation, says nothing about it; and then, curiously enough, Jesus himself never refers to it anywhere. There is no use made of it to prove his supernatural origin or office or power. And then, curiously enough again, do you notice how naïvely Luke and Matthew both refer to things which are utterly irreconcilable with these stories? Luke says, that, when Jesus was brought into the temple to be dedicated to God, Simeon and Anna, very suddenly drawn thither by the Holy Spirit, indicated by their wondrous prophecy what was to be the fate and fortune of this child. And the narrative goes on and says that Joseph and Mary were amazed and astonished at their words. Why should they be, if they knew that this little babe they were carrying in their arms was the Almighty God of the universe? Why should they be astonished that some wonderful fate is provided for him? And then, in the story of Luke, where he goes up and talks with the doctors in the temple, his mother and father do not seem to understand the child; and they say, "Why hast thou thus dealt with us?" And when he said, "Wist ye not that I must be

about my Father's business?" they wondered over the saying, and could make nothing whatever out of it. Does this seem possible, if they had known of this marvellous birth? Then we find that, when Jesus and John the Baptist met at the beginning of his public ministry, they seemed to have known nothing of each other. They are strangers; and John sends to Jesus particularly, and asks him if he is the coming Messiah. And yet Luke tells us that their mothers met and talked over the future of the two children, and understood perfectly their high destiny before they were born.

Could it be possible that these mothers could have lived together thirty years, perhaps been neighbors and friends, and neither of them have been acquainted with it, neither have heard of the wondrous origin of Jesus or the prophecies of the grand future that was before him? And then — still more striking and conclusive, if possible,— we find that, when Jesus begins his public ministry, his mother does not believe in him. His brethren and neighbors and friends, all of them are represented as persistent unbelievers to the last. If an angel had come to Mary and prophesied this birth, and if she had known what child this was, is it credible that when he begins his public ministry she should have rejected utterly his claims? Is it possible that his brothers never heard anything about it, so that they did not believe a word of it all their lives long; so that even when he claims to do some wonderful work, and is leading this new movement through the country, they can say of him, "He is beside himself"? Is it possible they could have charged one that they knew was of supernatural birth, even the omnipotent God, with madness, because he claimed to be the founder and leader of a new religious movement? And then, more wonderful still, when the Church at Jerusalem is founded, after the death of Jesus, we find the first leader of

that Church for years to be James, the brother of Jesus ; and, curiously enough, we find that this Church, with James at its head, did not believe a word about the supernatural origin ; and, when the first question of anything wonderful about his birth came up, this central, original Church, which had been led by the brother of Jesus himself, rejected the claim, and fought continuously for the natural, simple, human origin of Jesus. And the Ebionites, who were the descendants of this Church and inherited its name and its traditions, have opposed this dogma of the deity of Jesus from the very beginning. And, still further, you may read the records that are left to us by the immediate personal acquaintances and friends of all the apostles, those that come immediately after them, and for two hundred years you do not find on the part of any one of them the slightest reference to anything like a supernatural origin for Jesus. The first man that speaks of it is Justin Martyr, and he wrote about the year 150; that is, as far from the time of Christ as we are from the time of Newton. But he does not refer to it, he does not speak of it as though it were an admitted and accepted fact known from the beginning, but as something new, a modern doctrine that was springing up ; and he justifies it how? By saying that there is proof of it ? Not at all ; but by comparing it with similar stories concerning Jupiter and the heathen gods, of their having had children by human mothers. The first reference, then, in the Church to it, after a hundred and fifty years, we find justifying itself by reference to pagan stories of the amours of the gods. And by and by, when it does get established in the third and fourth centuries as a dogma by the Councils, how is it done?

You that look back, or have been accustomed to look back, with such reverence to the decisions of those gatherings of Oriental, Alexandrian, Grecian, and Roman bishops

in the first few centuries of the Church, I wish that in a few brief sentences I could picture to you one of their ecumenical councils, that you might see whether its opinions or its decisions are worthy of the respect of the nineteenth century. Did they come together there,— the greatest and wisest of them,— search the records for honest proof, consider carefully, that they might be sure to make no mistake? Nothing of the kind. They were managed with all the adroitness, with all the unscrupulousness, with all the cruelty, with all the tyranny, with all the personal violence and brutality of the worst possible specimen of a political caucus of which you have ever read. The Council of Ephesus, held in the fifth century under the control of Cyril of Alexandria, the one which decided that Mary hereafter must be called not simply the "Mother of Christ," but the "Mother of God,"— this very Council of Ephesus Cyril manipulated by the provinces he could control,— got his own followers to go to this city of Ephesus, as being a particularly favorable place, where the worship of Diana had prevailed, and where it would be especially easy to work upon the susceptibilities of the populace in favor of accepting Mary as a goddess in place of Diana. And the first day they met, before half the bishops that had been summoned had arrived, Cyril overawed all those present, and simply "bullied" them into pronouncing judgment. In some of these councils, they carried things so far as to bring in hospital waiters and men connected with the army, the camp followers, with clubs and weapons to overawe those that would not give their vote on the side of the majority, so that they might make it a unanimous thing. They carried it so far that they compelled bishops to sign their names to blank papers, which they themselves afterwards filled up with anything they pleased. In the midst of violence, then, and personal injury, carried even sometimes

to bloodshed, these doctrines that are supposed to be revealed directly from our Father in heaven were established among men. Cyril punished Nestorius, his opponent and the representative of the opposite view, by getting control of the emperor, who was a weak boy,—getting him under his power through his influence over his mother and sister. He banished him, and hurled after him the bitterest possible malediction, saying that he ought to be hated in this world and pursued by eternal wrath in the world to come for daring to say that Mary was only the mother of Christ, and not the mother of God,—for that was his only crime. "Boss" Tweed was a respectable man by the side of "Bishop" Cyril; and yet such men as he have given us a large part of our "Orthodoxy." It was Cyril who had the beautiful and learned Hypatia murdered and the flesh scraped from her bones by a mob of brutal monks.

In this way, then, these dogmas have been established. Now let me give you just one or two brief specimens of patristic reasoning concerning the birth and nature of Jesus, on the part of the Fathers of the early Christian centuries. I cannot give them verbally; but they are from such men as Chrysostom, Basil, Theophylact, Jerome, Damascenes, Ambrose, and the like,—these leading men, the Fathers of the Church. When they come to consider this question, do any of them fall back on the records? Do they offer any credible testimony? They say nothing about it. Chrysostom, for example, goes on at length and speaks of Mary's adroit management, and admits that she calls Joseph the father of Jesus. Why does she do it? He says she does it for two reasons: first, lest she should have been charged with having been an adulteress; and, secondly, lest the devil should find out that Jesus had really been born of a virgin. This plays a great part in the doctrine of that time.

They represented that the devil was expecting Jesus to be born about this time; and that, having read the prophecies, he knew that he was to be born of a virgin; and that he was watching the virgins all over the country, being ready to work them injury, if he saw the possibility of this strange thing coming to pass. And, in order to cheat him, Mary marries Joseph, so that he may not find out that she is a virgin. This is a specimen of the reasoning of a Church Father — one whose name stands among the highest — for accepting such stupendous and strange dogmas as have grown up in the history of Christianity. Jerome gives these reasons, and adds another,— that Mary might have a guardian in her flight into Egypt. Basil, Theophylact, and Damascenes, all say that she married to cheat the devil. Lactantius says that, as God had neither father nor mother, so Jesus must be twice born: once of God, and so without mother; and once again of a virgin, and so without father. Irenæus thinks he must have been virgin-born, in order to surpass David and Solomon, who were only born in the common way. The Emperor Constantine, at the Council of Nice, thinks it was fitting that such a being should "invent a new way of being born."

Then, again, in this age the relation of marriage was considered unholy. It was only an uncombed, filthy, wild man in the desert who was a "saint." They cast contempt on motherhood, and defiled, with impure imaginings, God's own method of birth; and so, when God is to visit the earth, they must make him heap indignity upon his own creation of wifehood, despise his own wondrous order, and astonish the world by appearing as a monstrosity. That we can still respect such absurdities, born of ignorance and filthy minds, only shows that as yet we are not completely civilized.

With just a word as to the time of the birth of Jesus, I

must pass on to consider a few things concerning his childhood. As to the day when Jesus was born, no one knows or probably ever will know. The twenty-fifth of December was not fixed upon until four or five hundred years after the birth. And why was that selected? Not because anybody knew anything about it; but about this time there was a great influx of Oriental worships into Rome. Among them came the cult of Mithra, the Vedic sun-god; and he, of course, being a sun-god, had his birthday on the twenty-fifth of December. And why? Because that is the date of the winter solstice, the time when the sun appears to stand still at the end of his southern journey, and turns northward again, a new-born year, to bring the spring and the flowers and the summer once more. And Jesus having come to be looked upon as the "Light of the World," "the Sun of Righteousness," the Church fixed upon this day, already widely celebrated all over the Empire, and determined that they would celebrate it as the birthday of Jesus. As to the year when he was born, we know somewhat more nearly, but shall never know certainly. We know he was born before the death of Herod the Great; and we know that Herod the Great died about four years before the popular date of the Christian era. So that, if we say that Jesus was born about the year 5 or 4 B.C., we shall come as near to it as we shall ever be able to with the data we have to determine by. The attempt is often made to see something specially significant in his name. But "Jesus" is only the Greek form of the common Hebrew "Joshua," and meant nothing more than James or William does to-day.

Now what do we know of his childhood? Two Sundays ago, I gave you two or three specimen stories that sprung up and were widely popular in the early Church concerning the wonderful things that Jesus did as a little boy, assisting his

father at his carpenter work, while they were in Galilee. If you will read the "Gospel of the Infancy," you will find it as full of strange, fanciful, fantastic, wondrous things as is the Arabian Nights. For example, Jesus falls in with a little boy who is possessed of devils, and the mother Mary takes one of his swaddling-bands and gives it to the youth, and tells him to lay it across his head; and immediately the devils, in the form of crows and serpents, begin to fly out in swarms from his mouth. Miracles of the most marvellous kind are wrought by him all the way on his journey into Egypt, and during his stay there. For example, he and Mary, his mother, are sitting hungry and thirsty under a fruit-tree, neither of them able to reach the branches which are above them; and the infant Jesus commands the tree to bend down and bring its fruit within reach of his hungry mother. It obeys, then bends back again into its place; and out of its root springs a fountain to refresh their thirst. These stories are endless; this simply as a specimen of them.

What do we really know? We have one glimpse, the incident in Luke, which at least appears authentic in itself, and seems so natural and life-like that at any rate we may be glad to believe it true. And yet we know how easily and naturally spring up the wondrous stories about the childhood and youth of those who have afterward become famous and renowned. But, after all, this is no more wonderful, perhaps, than the child Alexander Pope writing a finished lyric at the age of twelve, or the little boy Mozart at seven astonishing the musicians of Europe by his performance on the organ. Of the childhood of Jesus, then, we can only gather a glimpse by looking at what was the probable childhood of any Hebrew boy. Galilee, where Jesus was born, was in the northern part of Palestine, which at this time was divided into three provinces,— Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Nazareth

was built up the terraced sides and on the summit of a beautiful hill, a few miles from the Lake of Galilee,—a little to the north-west. And from the summit of this hill, and back of the town, Jesus could look north and see the snowy heights of Hermon; he could look toward the west, and catch a glimpse of the purple Mediterranean, and then the wooded hills and fruitful valleys in all their beauty stretching out in every direction as far as the eye could reach. And this city of Nazareth was wondrously beautiful in its situation and surroundings, built of small, square, white houses of limestone, quarried from the hill on which it stood; embowered in vines, and half-hidden by orchards of olive and palm and fig. Jesus had a childhood in one of the most beautiful parts of the world. If you want a picture of the home where he lived, think of one of those small stone houses, perhaps with only one room, with a flat roof where they could sit in the shade as the sun went down, and get the cooling breezes from the mountains and the sea; the room inside having as furniture only a painted bench or box along one side, a stool from which they fed as they sat round it cross-legged on mats upon the floor, a few water-jars with which they brought the water from the well that is still to be found in this same city of Nazareth. You can go and sit on the side of the well where doubtless the mother of Jesus sat with her water-pot, and gossiped and talked with her neighbors in those evenings of hundreds of years ago. Here, then, Jesus was born; here he grew up under the loving care of his father and mother.

How much education did he receive? None at all, in the modern sense of the word. There were no schools in Galilee at this time, except in a few of the larger centres. But the Jewish law, from the first, had laid it upon the conscience and heart of the parent above all things to teach the chil-

dren,— to teach them about God and duty; to instruct them in the law; to train them in conduct and character; to drill them in the history of the people. So that Jesus was taught by his father and mother. The Jews, I have said, laid special stress upon the matter of education; for one of their popular sayings is beautiful enough to become the motto of the leading civilization of the world. "The world is saved," said they, "by the breath of school-children." Although you may find in the Talmud many slighting sayings of women,— as you find in the earliest literature of all people,— there is one that is beautiful enough for me to quote, where it is said that "That child is best educated who is first taught by his mother." Jesus, then, was taught in the law; taught in the stories, the traditions, the histories, the wonderful doings of his people, from the first point of their history down to his own time. Other studies were under the ban. The law, they said, must be taught "night and day": other things only when it was neither night nor day — *i.e.*, never.

And then he had another kind of education. In the synagogues, which were in every little village and town at this time all over Palestine, the people gathered every Sabbath day to hear the reader as he selected now one part and now another of Jewish law or history; and any one that would, commented upon it and gave the sense, drew out its meaning and made its application. Jesus, then, was educated in the synagogue and at home.

And a more wondrous education still he had. Some of the greatest, the supreme minds of the world have had nothing that goes by the name of education with us. Where was Shakespeare educated? Nobody knows, except that he made the world, the universe, his school, and naturally drank in the wisdom of his time. Jesus was educated by the trees

and the flowers and those Oriental skies and those stars of the night; by his dreams of the past and his enthusiastic visions of the future. He was able to find

> "Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

He was one of the master minds of genius, and needed not to follow the line of ordinary drudgery and detail, but seemed to see that which the world had struggled to master.

And just one more phase in the education of Jesus I must not pass by. One thing you will be struck with in reading his life from the very beginning to the end; and that is the sharp contrast between his method of dealing with men and the Jewish law, and that which prevailed in Jerusalem among the scribes and rabbis of his time. Jesus, above all things, is pre-eminently humanitarian. He never thinks of placing a quibble of the law above the heart-ache or the hunger or the toil or tear of any least child of his race. The one thing he bitterly and unmercifully condemns on the part of the Pharisees and their fellows at Jerusalem is this making the real righteousness of God of no effect on account of their paltry, petty, contemptible observance of the little minutiae of the law, and calling this the orthodoxy of their time. It is from him that the word rings out, "The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath." It is from him that comes that sentence of condemnation for the son that bestows his property upon the temple, and neglects to care for his father and mother. It is he who despises the pitiful tithing of mint, anise, and cumin, when made a substitute for practical humanity and helpfulness.

Everywhere moral considerations supreme, everywhere humanity first and foremost; and the law and the ceremony and the sacrifice and everything else made not to rule and dominate and crush and tyrannize over man, but to help him,

or be destroyed. This is the characteristic of Jesus. Where did he get it? We know not how much of it may have been his natural, spiritual insight; but we can trace a few of the external influences that may have led him into this line of thought. Palestine now is desolated, poor, and dead; its beauty and its glory all passed away. But, in the time of Jesus, Capernaum, a great and flourishing city, only a few miles — a little short walk — from Nazareth, was for the first century what New York or London is to the nineteenth. Right through Capernaum and close to Nazareth, passed the great highway of trade from Rome, from Greece, from Asia Minor, on to Arabia, Damascus, and the far East. This great surging tide of trade flowed back and forth, year after year, all through the childhood of Jesus, passing almost by his very door, bringing not simply Jews, but Romans, Grecians, men from Asia Minor, Phœnicians, Syrians, traders from Tyre, from Sidon, from Damascus, — from all the peoples of the then known world. They passed and repassed, so that Jesus was schooled not in the narrow exclusiveness of Judea, where no man was a man except he was a Jew; but he was trained in the broadest of all schools and systems,— the school of the world. And he learned there to look upon all nationalities and all men as common children of the one Father who is in heaven. And out of this has come those wondrously broad sayings, like the parable of the good Samaritan. And these represent not Jewish exclusiveness, but all humanity. They fitted the religion of Jesus to go forth as a conqueror over the world, and appeal not merely to Judaic hearts, but everywhere to the heart of man. In the midst of these influences, then,— trained in the laws, the traditions, and in the common superstitions and beliefs of the time; filled with the promises, the prophecies, and the hopes of his race,— Jesus worked at his trade as a carpenter, and waited for the deliverance of his people.

PUBLIC LIFE.

We are now to consider some of the main characteristics and circumstances of the public life and teaching of Jesus.

The modern world would give much for an authentic portrait of the man as he emerged from the obscurity of his humble life at Nazareth, and entered upon that career which has made his name first in the history of religions. Many men have busied themselves in imagining what his earthly presence must have been like; and yet none of the pictures that have ever been made have any claim to authenticity. We do not know how Jesus looked, except as we judge of his personal appearance by the peculiar type of the nation to which he belonged. We shall come as near to it as is now possible if we think of him as a typical Hebrew; and the race characteristics have not changed very much. Jesus, then, belonged to that people that Christianity has poured contempt upon, and has pursued with persecution from that day until now.

As to the length of his public ministry the authorities are not at agreement, and consequently we shall not be able to decide. As I have already told you, according to the narrative of John, this ministry appears to have extended over something like three years and a half. According to the narrative of the synoptics, as they are called,—Mark, Matthew, and Luke,—the ministry was only a little over a year.

Neither can we now determine anything as to the exact chronological order of either the life or the teaching.

The scene of this ministry was in Galilee, around the lake, in the towns, on the hill-sides, and in Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity. Perhaps you have hardly noticed how small a country this Palestine was, within the contracted limits of which started this movement that has changed civilization. The widest part of Palestine was hardly more than the distance from here to the city of Worcester, and the length of the country from north to south was somewhat less than four times that distance; that is, about one hundred and forty miles by forty. This gives you a conception of how small is this little strip of land that was the scene on which this greatest drama of the world has been enacted.

When Jesus was about thirty years old, the narratives tell us, the nation in Judea, and its immediate vicinity especially, were startled by what seemed to them the reappearance of one of the old prophets. John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." We do not know anything about the parentage or the birthplace of this John the Baptist. All we know is this sudden appearance of his in the wilderness, and then the death that he met afterward at the hands of Herod. Picture him clothed in a camel's skin tied about his waist by a leathern belt, living on the wild honey that he could gather there in the desert, eating the dried locusts,— which was no unusual thing, but rather the common food of the poorest people,— a figure like this, strong only in his moral earnestness, coming as a prophet with a message to the people, ringing his word through all that region, so that it echoed up the valleys and from hill-top to hill-top all over the land,— the one word, "Repent! the kingdom of God is at hand." Here is the veritable Jewish prophet. We generally

get a false conception of what these prophets were, growing out of the mistake that the main characteristic of the prophet was the foretelling of future events. This, originally, had nothing whatever to do with the character or the office. The Hebrew word for prophet, illustrated in the lives of its most distinguished representatives, simply carries the idea of one who appears among the people with a message from God. So that our word, "herald," more nearly represents the original idea than does our ordinary modern notion of foreseeing or foretelling something in the future. John the Baptist then appeared, announcing the immediate coming of this kingdom of God. And, far off on the hills of Galilee, the young Jesus, his mind in a ferment, seething with the thoughts of the past history of his race and of its future high destiny, as he believed it lay in the mind and heart of God,— this Jesus hears that cry, and to him it is the voice of his own public call; and he starts, whether alone or with friends we know not, and probably walks this not very long distance, until he appears among those that have been gathered by the unusual cry of the Baptist, and asks that he also may partake of this life, and thus proclaim his faith as identical with that of the prophet.

All this story of the reluctance of John to baptize Jesus is no part of the original tradition: it is probably an afterthought. The story of the dove and the opening heavens, of course, is only legendary and poetical embellishment, gathering about this crisis period in the life of Jesus in the imagination of his followers in later times. The one thing that was central in this scene, the historic kernel of it all, may have been the recognition on the part of John,— a clear-sighted man, able to read human nature,— the recognition in this young, enthusiastic Nazarene of a power that should constitute him a leader in this movement among the people,

in a higher and broader sense than he himself was able to become. Jesus then receives this baptism, and becomes a disciple of John. An aftergrowth of this story was the appearance of fire on the Jordan; so that Jesus was baptized, not only with water, but "with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Just a word as to the significance of baptism, as John practised it. It was something, so far as we know, comparatively new at that time. Lustrations and washings and ceremonial cleansings of every kind are the property of all the ancient Oriental religions, and not the peculiarity of Christianity or Judaism; but this special form of baptism and the idea of baptizing, not simply proselytes,— a practice which grew up in after time,— but Jews themselves, as though they also needed cleansing preparation for this Messianic kingdom, this was something original and new on the part of the Baptist himself.

Immediately after this baptism, the story tells us that Jesus was driven by the spirit into the wilderness, and was there fasting forty days among the beasts, tempted of Satan; and at last the angels came and ministered to him. Here, again, is a legend with a basis of real fact, such as we all can appreciate. What man is there who does not go through a period of brooding and thinking and questioning himself before undertaking any great enterprise, before launching himself into any new career, some one on which hangs the destiny of all his future? Jesus, as was the custom at that time, not as an unusual thing, retires not into a closet or into the quiet of his home,— for the home of the people in this country at this age was simply all out-doors, and there was no place of retirement there,— he withdraws into an uninhabited part of the country; and, as many a prophet and saint has done both before and since, gives himself to hours and days of mental

struggle, meditation, and conflict, of balancing this thing and that, before he appears, with his mind made up and his face firmly set toward the career that was opening before his feet. And after-times, as is common in such cases, dressed up this mental struggle in objective forms, gave it pictorial expression; and the temptations became visible spirits, devils, delusive phantoms, whose luring shapes and voices suggest fleshly or spiritual sin. This, again, we know to be no new thing. And we know furthermore, with our modern knowledge of these wondrous nervous systems and brains of ours, that the fasting alone was enough to account for all the visions of devils that filled the air. Saints and prophets throughout all ages of the world have fasted on purpose to produce this exalted, ecstatic state of mind, which they interpreted as specially holy, and as opening communication for them with the unseen world. It was one of the commonest of all Oriental thoughts to believe that a man who was in ecstasy, or in any way beside himself, was possessed by some higher power. Even to-day, among the Arabs, the man who is idiotic or insane is treated with peculiar tenderness and consideration; and the people, as they look at him, say his soul is in heaven with God, and that is the reason that his earthly movements are so aimless or unaccountable,— his mind has gone away. Or else they interpret it as the presence of some other possessing spirit that overpowers and controls his own, and so is the occasion of all these fantastic and unusual proceedings. Even in modern times, these things have not been rare. You are familiar with the devil that Luther saw in his room in the Castle of the Wartburg, and at which he flung his inkstand. You are familiar with the traditions and stories of many another, of the legends of the saints for the last fifteen hundred years. At the last, when Jesus had triumphed over all doubt and fear, his mind

at rest, his future lying all clear and open before him, then there came a calm and peace figured by the angels that ministered to him. There are similar legends — showing how the human mind under the same circumstances works in the same way — concerning Buddha. He, too, was tempted by all the evil spirits in all the heavens and in all the hells. And, when at last he had conquered, the waiting and ministering spirits filled the air with perfumes, and scattered flowers all around him, and came and ministered to and lifted him up, and helped him, just as they did in the case of Jesus. Stories like these belong to more than one of the world's religions. We cannot believe their literal truth, for the reason that Macauley said he could not believe in ghosts,— he "had seen too many of them."

But very soon after the temptation and this decisive crisis in the life of Jesus there occurs the fatal crisis in the life of John which precipitates the leadership of the Nazarene. The Baptist had disturbed the idea of the staid people in Jerusalem, and by proclaiming the coming of this kingdom he had disturbed the uneasy mind of Herod. And they feared lest this talk of another kingdom, and this leading to a disturbance and uprising of the people that follows it, should bring them into complication with the Roman Empire. So a pretext is devised; and John is suddenly arrested, taken away from his followers, and shut up in the castle of Machærus, on the eastern border of the Dead Sea.

And now it is, when John is taken away, that Jesus, after his temptation and triumph, begins his own public ministry. And what is his message? The same precisely as that with which John began his career,— "Repent! the kingdom of God is at hand." "Repent, and believe the gospel." We want to pause just here, at the opening of this ministry of Jesus, and clear our minds a little as to the meaning of

a few of these common phrases. We have heard them so long without any definition, or applied inconsiderately to this thing or that, according to the fancy or the prejudice of the reader or preacher, that probably, if I should ask you what Jesus meant by "the kingdom of God" or "the gospel," I should get a great many very irreconcilable and inconsistent answers. The kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, meant to the Jew at this time simply the coming of that Messianic reign which was more or less outlined and defined in the minds and expectations of the people. It was called the kingdom of heaven instead of the kingdom of God, merely through a fancy of the time. The people had a superstitious fear of pronouncing the name of God, so that they ordinarily substituted some other word, frequently the word "heaven," in its place. What did Jesus mean by "the gospel"? The word means God's-spell, or good news. What was this good news? People talk now as though it were the whole four books written under the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that make up the gospel. We call them Gospels; but that is simply because they contain a record of the gospel. They are not the gospel. You will find almost every preacher in Christendom telling you that the gospel consists of the scheme of salvation outlined by or represented in his own little peculiar sect: this is the gospel, and nothing else is. What did Jesus mean by it? We want to go back, and take our authority at first hand. The Jews, as I said, were expecting in some form the coming of the Messianic kingdom. The gospel of Jesus and of John, then, was nothing more than this: "The day is close at hand, this kingdom is coming,—coming very speedily,—this that you have expected and waited and longed for, that the prophets have told us about for these hundreds of years,—this kingdom is close at hand." And Jesus went so far as

to teach that the forerunner they had expected had already come: it was this Elias, John the Baptist, that Herod had put to death. The forerunner has come, and the people have done unto him as they listed; and now the kingdom of heaven is speedily to follow. Repent in preparation for this coming. Believe — not in any transcendental, mystical way, as they talk about in these later years when they tell us of salvation by faith. The word "believe" in the mouth of Jesus had no metaphysical meaning: it was an intensely practical word, which meant simply, "Believe this message: I tell you that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand; believe, that you may get ready for it; repent, for it comes speedily."

I have made a very careful study as to what Jesus really believed concerning the method of this kingdom's coming. They tell us now — liberalizing and idealizing his words — that all he meant by it was a very gradual, very slow progress of light and truth and goodness in the hearts of men. They point us to the parable of the leaven, — a little put into three measures of meal, and gradually working through it until the whole was leavened. They tell us of the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, which was very small at first, but grew until it was a tree that shadowed the whole earth. I admit the force of all these. But they do not have the weight of authority that the other aspect of this coming kingdom appears to have. All three of the original Gospels, the whole triple tradition, as I have explained it to you, is agreed as to this one thing: that Jesus believed and taught that there was to be very soon a miraculous revelation from heaven, an utter overturning, upheaval, and change, and that the kingdom of God was to come, — yes, suddenly and in a moment. As the lightning appears out of one side of the heavens and flashes even to the other side, so speedy and

so universal was to be the coming of the Son of Man. I cannot help being convinced that this was a part of the belief which Jesus held and taught. And sometime, we do not know just when, the conviction forced itself upon the mind of Jesus that he was to be the Messiah of this coming kingdom, through whom it was to be revealed, and he was to appear surrounded by a retinue of angels in the clouds of heaven as its king. We do not know, as I said, at what time in the ministry of Jesus this took place; but we have the record of his questioning his disciples and saying to them, "Whom do people say that I am?" And the answer comes, "Some of them say that you are Elijah, the prophet; some, that you are Jeremiah; and some, that you are that prophet," probably meaning Moses, returned again to earth. Some say one thing, some say another. The people are divided. Jesus turns to them, and says, "But whom say ye that I am?" And Peter answered, "Thou art the Messiah." And Jesus' answer, as he quietly accepts this statement, is merely that they must tell no man of it for the present, but wait for God's own time and revelation of this stupendous fact.

Now, then, we want to look at the characteristics of the teaching of Jesus and the relation in which he stood to the parties and other teachers of his time. It would seem very strange to us in this modern world and amidst our modern customs to find a man choosing a few disciples and walking on foot about the country proclaiming some message as though it were from God, stopping to converse with people under trees by the wayside, or by the spring as they waited to cool themselves in the shade and quench their thirst, or gathering a crowd upon some street corner and addressing them with this strange new message,—all this would seem very peculiar to us; but it was not strange or peculiar to those Oriental lands and in the midst of their Oriental ways.

Jesus then chooses his disciples, foremost among whom are Andrew and Peter; and he makes hereafter his home at their house. They lived in Capernaum, on the borders of the lake, and were among the great crowd of fishermen who lived by the riches of the finny tribe that this lake contained. Jesus passed his life, then, in the midst of these humble companions, travelling about the country. And there are three different aspects of his teaching that we must glance at for a moment.

The first method we will notice comes nearer than anything else we have in modern times to what we are accustomed to call expository I presume you have heard, first or last, some minister preach an expository sermon; taking perhaps a chapter or half a chapter of the Bible, reading it and commenting upon it more or less at length, on this verse or that, as he was interested or thought the occasion demanded. Jesus was accustomed to hear this kind of preaching in the synagogues on every Sabbath day. The synagogue, at this time was all over Palestine; there were several hundreds of them in Jerusalem; they were in every important town from one end of the land to the other. And these synagogues had grown up out of a felt necessity on the part of the people to become acquainted with the written law. They were not able to have copies of this law in their own homes, as we can at the present time, or there probably would never have been any synagogues; and, if there never had been any synagogues, there probably would never have been any Christian Church; for the synagogue is the ancestor of the church in the direct line of ascent. Jesus, then, as a boy, and all the way up, had been accustomed to go into the synagogue, and hear some one get up,— a scribe or a lawyer,— and read a certain part of the old Scriptures, and then sit down while any one who chose, as in a modern Quaker meeting, arose

and addressed the assembly, explaining according to his idea the meaning of the law, or making a personal and practical application of it. We find a specimen of this kind of teaching in the history of Jesus; as, for example, in the case of his first sermon delivered at Nazareth, according to Luke. He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, the roll was handed to him to read, he read a passage from Isaiah, gave the roll of the law back again to the servant of the synagogue, then sat down and addressed the people, as was the custom at that time.

Another method was one to which we may give the name of Socratic,—very much like the method of Socrates, the philosopher, in Athens. This method was that of conversation, of asking and answering questions; as for example, when he preached to the Samaritan woman at the well, or to the lawyer who came to him and asked him what were the chief commandments of the law,—a sharp contest of asking and answering questions on the part of Jesus and those around him. You remember one of the best cases of it, as connected with the collection of the tribute. They bring to Jesus one of the Roman denarii, or pennies as it is translated, and try to catch him, and get him into trouble with the authorities. They say to him, "Here is this penny,—now is it lawful to pay this in tribute to Cæsar, or is it not?" The tribute, as we know, was very unpopular in Jerusalem about this time. And, if he said it was lawful, he would bring down upon him the wrath of the Jews; if he said it was not lawful, he would bring himself in conflict with the authorities. And Jesus says, "Bring me a penny, and let me look at it." And, when they have brought it, he says, "Whose is this image and superscription?" "Why, that is Cæsar's." Then he says, "Give to Cæsar that which belongs to Cæsar, and to God that which belongs to him;" answering them happily

and sharply, and escaping the trap which they had, as they supposed, so skilfully laid for him. Case after case of this kind of question and answer and sharp reply we find all through the Gospels.

But the most wonderful of all, and the last one that I refer to, is his teaching by parable. We are so familiar with these parables that their power, their wonder, their beauty, are half lost upon us. They are to us like some beautiful extract from Milton or one of the old poets, that is read and read and reread in our school-days, until we were tired of it and the beauty had all evaporated; and, when we look at it now, we cannot think of the beauty: we only think of the drudgery and the weariness of that old school-time. So it is in regard to these parables. We must not think that Jesus was the originator of the parable. Five hundred years, at least, before Jesus lived, Buddha, "the light of Asia," had taught in parables as remarkably as did Jesus in the after time. We could make a large collection of most beautiful and striking examples from the teachings of Buddha; and yet you are not to think, on the other hand, that Jesus borrowed his parables from Buddha. There was probably no sort of connection, so that the fact that Buddha taught thus does not touch at all the originality of Jesus. But not only did Buddha teach thus, but the rabbis and the leaders of the schools in Judea were accustomed to teach in precisely the same way. And we can find in the old Jewish literature the germ of some of the most beautiful and touching of Jesus' parables; just as we can find in old Italian, Spanish, French, or English literature some of the germs of Shakespeare's masterly plays. This, again, does not touch the originality; for this is manifested quite as much in the power with which old material is used as it is in the invention of new material. The originality of an architect is not in inventing some new kind of

trees or stones with which to build, but it is the power, the genius, the beauty with which he builds out of the old world-wide and universal materials. The word "parable" means simply *placing beside;* that is, placing a story alongside of a truth to vivify and illustrate it, and fix it in the mind. Jesus taught at length in these parables, and they are the most conspicuous and wonderful part of his teaching. Perhaps you will hardly be ready to agree with the statement when I make it; and yet for poetic power, for imaginative strength and genius, for intellectual clearness and ability, the parables of Jesus alone are enough to rank him among the foremost minds of the world. If that one little immortal song of Gray's, "The Elegy," lifts him up on a pedestal high among the poets of modern England, that one song making him immortal, ought not these poems in prose, these sermons in pictures, these wonderful portraits of Jesus, to give him not only rank as a moralist, but rank as an imaginative genius equal to almost any that the world has ever seen?

One word as to the originality of the moral teachings of Jesus, as to the Sermon on the Mount, for instance. And, concerning this sermon, let me say that you must not think of it after the idea of a modern sermon. Jesus never preached that Sermon on the Mount just as it stands now. It is simply a collection, gathered up in after-time, of the doctrines, the ethical teachings and sayings of Jesus, delivered nobody knows on how many different occasions. This is perfectly apparent to you as you read it. There is no sort of connection of idea running all through it, but most abrupt transitions everywhere. There is a saying on one subject, and right by the side of it a saying upon another. It is simply a collection of sayings; and almost every one of them, in some form or other, was common to the thought of the Jewish people at this time. Jesus did not originate his morality. He simply gave ex-

pression to, and put into beautiful and permanent form, the highest, sweetest, noblest, and purest thought of his day. The difference between him and the other Jewish teachers perhaps I may illustrate in this way. These beautiful moral ideas were all over the Jewish life, like the wild flowers all over Palestine, on hill-side and in valley. Jesus simply plucked these flowers, trimmed them, arranged them, brought them together in bouquets, set them in vases of beauty and finished workmanship, and left them to be the beauty and fragrance and joy of all future time.

Now just one word more as to the characteristics of his teaching. How did he differ from the rabbis and the other masters of his time? What did the people say about him? We shall get our hint right there. The people listened to him, it says, and were astonished at his doctrine, or at his method of teaching. For, they said, he does not go on explaining and interpreting and telling us over and over again what this passage means or what can be twisted out of that, but he speaks as though he had authority, and not as the scribes. What did they mean by this? They meant simply this: that Jesus, like the grand, original, primal soul that he was, rested not on the authority of texts and verbalisms and quibbles, but fell back on the ultimate, original authority of his own moral consciousness; delivered himself first hand, fresh from the inspiration of the spirit of God within him. As he says time and again, all through the Sermon on the Mount, "They used to tell you of olden time to do so and so; but *I* tell you"—. And he said, "Unless your righteousness shall exceed this that they used to practise, you shall not enter into this coming kingdom of heaven." This was the one thing then that distinguished him from the rabbis and teachers of his time,— this falling back on his own intuitive moral consciousness, daring to revise the old law

itself, to put into it new meanings, and say, "You must be better than your fathers, you must live better, you must think better, you must make some advance on the olden time, or you are not fit for the kingdom of heaven."

Now, as the last division of our subject, which is a very large one, but which I shall try to treat as briefly as I can, I want to sketch for you the parties of the time in which Jesus lived, and show you at what points he came in conflict with them. Why was Jesus' life a tragedy? Why should the steps of this meek and lowly one lead, and lead inevitably, to the cross? Why did not the people accept him?

The world shows us two types of greatness. One is the summing up and the giving expression to the main characteristics of the age. Mr. Gladstone defines the orator as one who receives the feelings, hopes, aspirations of the people, as the upper air receives the mist from rivers and lakes and valleys, and, condensing it into clouds, gives it back again in rain. People hear such an orator, and say, "That is just what I always felt, but could never express." This kind of greatness is always popular; for it is the ideal embodiment of the popular life.

The other type is ahead of the age, representing a higher life, that can only come by disturbing, tearing down, and rebuilding. Such was Jesus. This is always misunderstood and hated by the powers of the age. It is the kind that is always cast out by its own time, and to which monuments are built by after generations.

This will come out more particularly, as we look at the condition of affairs in Jerusalem. The two great divisions of the Jewish people at this time were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees were the aristocratic party, the party which held to the old original law: they were typical conservatives,—they stuck by the law. This is the

reason why they rejected the traditions of the people. They would not own a tradition that added anything to the Pentateuch. The law as it was settled before they went into captivity in Babylon, that was the only one they recognized as divine. Out of that captivity and in later times had grown up ever so many beliefs about angels, the future life, and immortality. The Sadducees would have none of it: they did not believe in any angels, in any spirits, or any future life. There was nothing about them in the old law, consequently they rejected them. And then these Sadducees, being very comfortable and aristocratic, almost all of them belonging to the wealthy part of the community, did not feel any special interest in any angels to look after their affairs here or their comfort in a future life. The characteristics, then, of the Sadducees, were those of extremely comfortable and respectable conservatism. The word "Sadducee" means simply son of Zadok.

We need pay no special attention to the Zealots, the Herodians, the Essenes, the scribes, and lawyers. The scribes and lawyers might equally be Pharisees: these words only represent those who copied, read, and interpreted the law. The Herodians were those who had given up any expectation of a Messianic kingdom, but hoped that through Herod might come the deliverance of their country; that is, they hoped that Herod and his family might be able to break away ultimately from Rome, and establish the independence and supremacy of the Jewish people: so they were called Herodians, or followers of Herod. The Essenes were a little sect of communists, retired from the world, constituting a sort of Oriental "Brook Farm" of the first century, or an Oriental community of Shakers, having nothing whatever to do with the practical life of the time.

The Pharisees, then, are the ones we need chiefly to un-

derstand: and concerning them there is at the present time one of the most wide-spread misunderstandings of the world. We have taken the bitter, biting sarcasms and denunciations of Jesus, applied only to a part of the Pharisees, and out of those words have pictured a whole school. Who were the Pharisees, and what does the word mean? It means simply a separatist. The Pharisees were the Oriental Puritans of the first century; the ones who separated themselves from everything that they considered evil, and devoted themselves to what they understood to be the truth, in order that they might be ready for the coming of the kingdom of God. They were the great popular party, the party which accepted new ideas, the party of progress, the ones that represented the hopes of the Jewish people. In short, the Pharisees of the first century were the very best people there were. That does not mean that all of them were good, any more than all church members are good in the nineteenth century. There was a good deal of human nature in Judea eighteen hundred years ago. It was very much like the human nature that we find in Boston to-day. There were Pharisees *and* Pharisees. There were those that were devoted to truth, and there were those that were devoted to their ceremonials, their spiritual pride, and their forms. And I think I can detect in this bitterness of Jesus an element of sadness and disappointment. For the Pharisees, of all others in Jerusalem, were the ones among whom Jesus had the right to expect sympathy. It was as though a man's own friend that he had relied upon had turned against him; and you know many and many a time we feel a sense of hurt and injury from a friend who has deserted us, that we never feel towards a stranger or an enemy. You remember those words of David where he speaks of Shimei and says, "He, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath

lifted up his heel against me." This I think was much of the feeling that Jesus had toward the Pharisees.

And that Jesus was not the first one to note the different classes among them is apparent from the Talmud itself. You will be very much interested, I think, in finding that the Jews themselves divided the Pharisees into seven different kinds, only one of whom they considered true Pharisees and worthy of the name. And Jesus launched his thunderbolts of scorn and contempt only against those that the better part of the Jews themselves looked upon in the same way. You will find, for example, that they talked about one kind of Pharisees that they called "heavy-footed"; that is, they were so exhausted by fasting that they could hardly drag one foot after the other. Then there was another kind that they called "bleeding" Pharisees,— a wonderful sarcasm! The streets in Jerusalem were little, narrow ones; and the houses were built, as you know, right on the side of the street, so that you touched or brushed the walls as you went along. These "bleeding" Pharisees were the ones that were so afraid of seeing a woman that, if they met one on the street, they would violently turn their heads to keep from looking at her, and bump them against the wall. Then there was the "mortar" Pharisee, as they called him,— a man who walked with his back bent like a pestle lying in a mortar, at an obtuse angle. Then the "humped back," the ones that hung their head as they walked. Then there was another class that was called the "Do-alls"; that is, they were persons who were all the time hunting for something more in the way of ceremonial to do, asking their neighbors if there was not some other duty they could perform. Then there was the "painted" Pharisee, the one who wore his piety so plainly upon his face that one could tell him as far as he could see him. These names were the ones that the Jews themselves

gave to these six kinds of Pharisees, long before Jesus uttered his denunciations against them. The last and true Pharisee — and you will think you have got into Christianity when you hear it — is "he who does the will of his Father in heaven because he loves him"; that is the true Pharisee, according to the Talmud.

Now how did it happen that Jesus' life ended as a tragedy? What were the points with which he came in contact in the Jewish life of his time? I must sum them up as briefly as I can. First, Jesus violated the social conventionalisms and proprieties of his times. The Pharisees kept themselves strictly apart by themselves. There was not, indeed, that hard and fast institution of caste, such as we know it in India to-day; and yet the upper class had nothing, or very little, to do with the lower, and felt that they were made unclean ceremoniously if they came in contact with them. Jesus associated with publicans, with outcasts, with sinners, with the rabble. If one of your aristocratic friends in Boston, who stands highest and thinks the most of the blue blood in his veins and of the street on which he lives, should invite to his house and associate on familiar terms with a man like Denis Kearney, you would perhaps get an indication of the impression that Jesus made on the public mind. He put himself on a level with the outcast; and, when they taunted him with it, he gave them that divine answer, "It is the sick that need the physician, and not the well." Jesus, like all the grand souls of the world, saw not aristocrat or plebeian, not rich men or poor men, not pure or sinners; he simply saw *men* and *women*, the children of the one Father in heaven,— an idea that Burns has so finely expressed in later times, when he said,—

> "The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
> The man's the gowd for a' that."

And then he offended their spiritual pride. You remember that story of how the Pharisee invites him to his house, and the woman that is a sinner comes in; and, as he reclines at meat, his feet extended behind him from the table, and with his sandals off, as was the custom, how she comes and kneels down and breaks the alabaster box of ointment upon his feet, and then wipes them with the hairs of her head, weeping her repentance and sorrow for her past life. And the Pharisee whispers under his breath, "Why, this is no prophet: if he was a prophet, he would know what sort of a woman this is who is paying this kind of strange attention to him." Then Jesus appeals to him, and says: "Simon, there were two men that were in debt to a creditor. One owed him a small sum of money, and the other owed him a great deal. And when he found neither of them could pay, he frankly forgave them both: now which of them will love him most?" And of course he was compelled to answer, "The one who is forgiven the most." Then he says: "Here is this woman: she has sinned much, and been forgiven. You think you have sinned very little, and God is just as ready to forgive you. But it is perfectly natural that she should love more than you do." And so he told them on every hand, "You ceremoniously clean, even the aristocratic and noble, just because you think you are so good, are liable to be left outside, while the publicans and harlots, who know they are bad and want to be helped, press forward into the kingdom of heaven ahead of you." Thus he offended their spiritual pride.

Then he overturned from its very foundation their highest conception of righteousness. Their righteousness was strict obedience to the *Thorah*. It is a misfortune that this word has come to be translated law. It does not mean law at all, in our modern sense of the word. This word that we find all

through the New Testament ought to be simply *Thorah*, the old ancient Hebrew word, because it is almost untranslatable. But what it means is a land-mark or guide-post,— something standing in the wilderness or desert to show a person the way. What the Jews meant by their old Scripture was that it was a land-mark, a guide-post. This strict obedience to the *Thorah* was their idea of righteousness; and they believed that the kingdom of God could only come by keeping it a good deal more carefully than they had ever kept it in the past. And Jesus came, letting all the sinners and publicans and outcasts of every kind into this kingdom of heaven, without any regard to their having kept the *Thorah* at all. So these Pharisees, who had been living their strict and comfortable and careful lives all the way through, found that, if they accepted this Jesus, this had all got to go for nothing, and they were no better than anybody else.

How far they carried this matter, it will be interesting for you to know. Take, for example, two points where Jesus offended,— in the matter of washings and the Sabbath. The Talmud, that great body of Jewish literature, contains one hundred and twenty-six chapters devoted to washings alone. Four of them are devoted entirely to the manner of washing the hands. Jesus put this all one side, and said, "It does not make any difference whether you wash your hands or not." See how large a part of their tradition he offended in this. Then in regard to the Sabbath. The observance of this had grown up until it was such a monster tradition as is astonishing to see. They had it settled as to what kind of oil you should fill the lamp with on the Sabbath, what kind of knots might be tied, as to how far you might walk, how much you might carry. You must not carry the weight of a dried fig; but you might carry a locust's egg, because that was supposed to be a charm against some kind of disease;

you might carry a fox's tooth, because that would cure sleeplessness; or the nail of a man that had been crucified, because that was a charm against the ague. But you must not wear nails in your sandals; you must not walk in the grass, because you might carelessly knock out some of the seeds, and that was a kind of threshing. You must not do anything that would look in the least like any sort of work. What does Jesus do? He goes walking through the fields of corn, not only knocking out the grass seeds, but gathering the corn, rubbing it in his hands and getting the kernels to eat because he was hungry. He violates their ideas in every direction, and sums it all up by saying, "This Sabbath that you are making a burden, that you neither bear yourself nor enable anybody else to bear, is made for man, and not man for it. Take off the burden, and let man go free."

And then, again, he interfered with their ecclesiastical jealousy. We know what this means here in America at the present time. We know what the principle is in human nature. You, if you are a lawyer, are never jealous of a doctor. A doctor is never jealous of a minister. A man is never jealous of another man in any other profession. It is the rival in his own profession that he is jealous of. So that you will find always one sect of religionists are very jealous of other sects. Jesus touched their ecclesiastical jealousy at the quick. "Here is a man not even a Pharisee; who has paid no attention to the law, who has never been in our schools, a man that is not orthodox at a single point, and he claims to come here and teach us, to teach the people and lead them away from our ministrations. Away with him!"

And then he touched, in a way that perhaps you have never thought of, the business interests of Jerusalem. Do you know this loyal love of truth, of love to God and of love to man, that Jesus preached, had in it a power of leverage

to overthrow the temple, and that meant the overthrow of Jerusalem? Did you ever think of it? Suppose, for example, I should go to Washington, and make a proposition of some political change that would destroy the capital, move the national centre perhaps to St. Louis. Every property-holder in Washington, every man interested in keeping the capital there, would be my deadly enemy in a moment. Suppose I should go to Lawrence, and propose such a change in the industries of New England as would destroy all their mills and all their interests connected with and dependent upon them. The man that invented the railroad was not looked upon as a benefactor by those who built stage-coaches. Any man who proposes a change in advance creates enemies out of every one who is living on the local and vested interests of the time. The whole city of Jerusalem depended upon the temple and the worship and the industries connected with it. The Jews had a saying that Palestine was the eye of the world, and Jerusalem was the white of the eye, and the temple was the pupil. He who touched that, then, touched that which was most sacred of all; and it overthrew the strength and glory of the city. You remember the tumult that the apostles raised in Ephesus when they proposed to change the religion, so that the shrine-makers for Diana would find themselves out of employment. What a tumult and storm it created about their ears, so that the crowd rushed into the theatre and yelled for two hours, hardly knowing why they had come together, only that something was in the wind that was going to touch the worship of Diana, and so the prosperity of the city! Jesus touched the temple by saying it does not make any difference where you worship. He overthrew the central idea of the property-holders of Jerusalem.

Then he interfered with and offended their conception of

the Messiah. Jesus was not at all such a Messiah as the Jews were led to look for by the best interpretations they could get of their prophets. Jesus came from Galilee. They said: "Why, look, there has never come any prophet out of Galilee. That is a half-barbarous place, a place where God would not be likely to manifest himself. They do not pay any attention to the law or to temple-worship, half as much as they do here." They said: "The Messiah must be born in Bethlehem. Jesus was not born in Bethlehem, but in Nazareth." They said: "The Messiah must come in the line of David; and Jesus was not born in the line of David." And, if you notice it, Jesus accepts that charge, and goes on to prove that there is no need of the Messiah's being a descendant of David. He offended their conception of the Messiahship at every point. The Messiah was coming with power and glory; there were to be portents and changes in the heavens preceding his coming. All the old prophets had said so; Jesus himself said so concerning his second coming. But, when he was asked for a sign, he refused to give it; and when they asked, "By what authority do you do these things?" he refused to tell them. He gave none of the marks of the Messiah, such as they were looking for; and they were offended at him.

Then, as the last and grand offence of all, he disturbed all the conservatives and peace-lovers of the country by threatening to bring them into trouble with Herod and Rome. The Emperor of Rome cared very little about the hope of a Messiah among the Jews. Herod cared very little. He would take a prophet, one or more of their leaders,— it made no matter to him,— and put him in prison and behead him at his will; but, at all events, the peace must be kept. And this talk of a coming kingdom, and of one coming immediately, was bringing them into conflict with the authorities

at every point, and was injuring what peace and quiet they already had.

Out of such misconceptions, such misunderstandings, and misinterpretations, were gathering those clouds of jealousy, of suspicion, of hatred, of opposition, that hung over that little hill called Mount Calvary, since that time most famous in all the world. These black clouds gathered above it, holding in their bosom the tempest and the thunderbolt, ready to break upon the patient head of him whom they cast out, but whom we love and reverence as the foremost man of time.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

As we review the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus, I hope you will bear in mind that I am not arguing either for or against the question of the resurrection or the future life of the human soul, but am only treating certain alleged historical facts.

In the legendary story of Jesus, we are told that it grew dark at noon on the day of his crucifixion. If we may not accept this as literal fact, we may at least take it as a beautiful and appropriate poetic setting-forth of that which was real in his life. His life grew dark before it was noon: before the sun was at its zenith, it was suddenly eclipsed.

> . . . "This star
> Rose . . . through a little arc
> Of heaven, nor having wandered far,
> Shot on a sudden into dark."

Last Sunday we noticed the gathering of the clouds of suspicion, hatred, and jealousy around him; and now we are to see him passing under the fringes of this tempest that is so soon to burst with fatal stroke upon his head.

The Jews were accustomed to keep the Passover on Thursday evening, on the fourteenth day of their month Nisan. This festival seems to have been made up of mingled elements, some of the customs and practices being drawn from an original nature-worship, and a part from the later worship

of Jehovah. In any case, at the time we are considering, a family or a group of friends was accustomed to gather on this evening, and to eat a lamb roasted whole, with dried fruits and bitter herbs, in celebration of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. Whether they were originally attached to them or not, they had come to look upon each one of the particular parts of the ceremony as having some special and peculiar significance. Jesus, then, and his disciples,— being a Jew as he was,— were gathered in an upper chamber in Jerusalem, in the house of some secret or open friend; and he sat down with them to keep this Jewish feast of the Passover. He seems to have been shadowed already with a premonition of the coming disaster; for we find him talking in mysterious sentences concerning the death which he was to suffer. It is hardly possible for us to tell now, with the records we have at hand, as to whether Jesus really felt certain that he was to die, or whether he did not expect some supernatural deliverance, even at the last moment; for one of our authorities tells us that he spoke of his being able, if he would, to command more than twelve legions of angels to come to his defence and rescue. And then that last pathetic cry of his upon the cross—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"— will at least bear an interpretation of disappointment, as though he expected a deliverance that, at the last moment, did not come. We will not dogmatically decide that this is the meaning, for it may have another. And yet there are some serious difficulties in believing that Jesus told his disciples, in plain terms, that he was coming again; for we find, after his death, that they are utterly crushed, broken, and scattered. They either did not understand that he was to die, or else they did not believe his word,— that he would reappear once more.

So much, at any rate, seems plain. Jesus, then, sits with his

disciples, and eats the Jewish feast of the Passover. And, when the supper is ended,—that is, the formal part of the supper,—he takes a loaf of bread and breaks it, and distributes it to the disciples, and says, "Take, eat: this is my body." And he takes a cup of red wine, such as they were always accustomed to drink, and passes it to them, saying: "This is my blood which is shed for many. Do this in remembrance of me; for I will not drink with you again until I do it anew in the coming kingdom of God." This naturally symbolic way of asking them to remember him is beautiful and pathetic. And yet to what a cruel engine of oppression and outrage has it grown in the history of the Church. All through mediæval Christianity it was made the engine of excommunication and torture, so that men feared it more than they did death itself; because the Church had built up the fable that the priests who were able to turn the bread and wine into the veritable body and blood of God had also the power, by preventing the communicant from partaking of these mysterious emblems, to ensure his everlasting torture in the future world. We cannot believe that Jesus had the slightest idea that this was to become an established rite or sacrament in perpetuity in the Church. For does not Jesus himself say over and over again that this coming kingdom is to appear miraculously in the heavens before the people that were about him were all dead? He had no idea then of any unrolling future of the Church, such as we have seen during the last 1800 years, and of this being wrought into a perpetual and elaborate ritual.

Either while he is at this supper or very soon after, Judas, one of the twelve, mysteriously disappears from their number, and leaves only the eleven disciples. After singing together a hymn,—as the translation has it, or the Psalms from the one hundred and fifteenth to the one hundred and eigh-

teenth, as was customary at the close of this supper,— Jesus and his disciples leave the upper chamber toward midnight, go out of the city in the darkness across the little brook Kedron, which ran through the valley that separated the mountain on which Jerusalem stood from the Mount of Olives, and here seek seclusion, a place for meditation and prayer, in an olive grove near the foot of the mountain, in a place called, from an "oil-press" which was near by, Gethsemane. Here his soul was weighted and troubled, and he passes through an agony of conflict. Divining without any doubt the purpose of the absence of Judas, his soul for the last time goes through that tremendous struggle as to whether he shall face his fate manfully or save his life by flight. It must be decided at once, for now the crisis hastens on apace. Are we to think for a moment that there was any less bravery in the soul of Jesus because he shrank — young, and filled and flushed with life and power as he was — from a speedy and ignominious death? Rather, to my mind, does his courage seem to tower above many of those who have met death without one sign of flinching or reluctance. Insensibility is not bravery. The highest courage is that which feels what death means, which shrinks from it in every quivering fibre of the thrilling life, and which yet, for principle, dares to walk on and meet it. "Are you not afraid?" said a young and boastful officer to an older companion whose face was blanched and pale as they stood in the midst of the thick falling shot of the battle-field. "Yes," was the reply, "I am afraid; and, if you were one-half as fearful as I, you would flee." Courage does not mean any lack of shrinking: it means standing the ground bravely in spite of the shrinking.

While Jesus, then, was passing through this conflict, Judas is leading a part of the temple guard, which was under the control of the priests; and they come with their lanterns and

torches and weapons, enter the garden, and at a signal from Judas arrest the Nazarene. There is a momentary struggle, the drawing of a sword on the part of one of the disciples; but Jesus, whose weapons were "not of this world," bids him put it up again, and quietly submits to his fate. Now, then, he is led away alone. One of the disciples has betrayed him, one of them is soon stoutly to deny him with an oath, and all have deserted him in his hour of trial. He is led away at midnight to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest; and the fragments of the Sanhedrin, such as they could gather at this unseasonable hour, are summoned for the purpose of condemning him. For his condemnation was a foregone conclusion; and whether they had witnesses and evidence or not was of slight account. For, when an ecclesiastical court has decided to put a disturber out of the way, it does not look very far for witnesses or evidence. But they are not able to put him to death without the consent of the Roman power; for Cæsar had taken away from them this prerogative. So they must wait until morning; and then they go to the Pretorium, the great palace of Herod, now occupied by Pilate. For Pilate, although he lived at Cesarea a great part of the time, was accustomed to come to Jerusalem with his Roman soldiers during the feast, to keep the people quiet; lest there should be a popular uprising. They took him then to Pilate; and here, in an open court, on a pavement called in the Hebrew, Gabbatha, Jesus the culprit is brought before the man on whose word hangs his life or his death. Pilate seems disposed to let him go. He would naturally look with a sort of contempt upon these religious quarrels among people with whom he had no sympathy, and he evidently regarded Jesus only as a simple, good-natured enthusiast; and he proposes to the people that, as it was the custom on this day of the feast to set free some one who was

held in custody, they accept the gift of the life and freedom of the Nazarene. But the crowd, instructed by the Pharisees and the chief priests, cried out: "Not this Jesus. Give us Jesus Bar-Abbas,— the son of Abbas — and let this one be crucified." Pilate did not shrink usually from putting a man to death; and though he would have been glad to set Jesus free, yet he dared not, after the nature of the charge they had brought against him, lest he should be reported to Herod or Cæsar as conniving at a popular political uprising: for they had said, "This fellow claims to be King of the Jews." Pilate, therefore, easily condemns him, after washing his hands in water, saying: "I will have nothing to do with the matter. Do as you please." And they took him and led him away to be crucified.

The scene of the crucifixion we are unable now to determine. We only know it was on a little bald-topped hill outside of the city, from its peculiar appearance taking the name of "a skull": for this word, skull, is the English translation of the Latin Calvary, and Calvary is the Latin translation of the Hebrew Golgotha, each of the words meaning simply a skull, which was given to this hill from some peculiarity of its rounded outline. Here, then, Jesus is nailed to the cross while it is lying on the ground, — his arms stretched apart on the cross-beam, his feet nailed together with a single spike; and then the cross is lifted into its position. This is about twelve o'clock. He hangs there from twelve to three. It was not unusual for a person in such a position, if he were strong and robust, to live for a day or two; hence the surprise when they come to Pilate and tell him that Jesus is already dead, and when Joseph of Arimathea begs the privilege of taking down the body and putting it in his own new tomb. The ladies of Jerusalem, to mitigate the sufferings of those who were crucified, were accustomed to prepare a

stupefying drink; but this, when it was lifted to the lips of Jesus and he had tasted, he refused, preferring to suffer with a clear brain and to meet his fate with open eye.

Jesus, then, at last is dead, and he is buried away very hastily on this Friday night, because it was the Jews' "preparation day,"—that is, the day preceding the Sabbath; and, lest they should be polluted by having anything to do with a dead body, they must despatch this business the night before. The death of Jesus, as I have already intimated, threw his followers into utter confusion and dismay. They were scattered abroad, hopeless and aimless. Nobody knew what to think about it or what to do. We find an intimation as to their state of mind, in the story of the two disciples taking an evening walk to Emmaus. They say one to another: "We do not know what this means. We trusted that this had been he who should have redeemed Israel; and yet now he is crucified and buried, and our hopes are gone."

We must pass over a little time. After a few days or weeks — we know not just how long it was — had passed, we find the strange story in circulation that the crucified had risen again,— that Jesus is alive, that he has ascended into heaven. We find the scattered disciples gathered again in Jerusalem into the central congregation which constituted the first church. Jesus is alive, they say; he was the Messiah; he is risen, he has ascended, and will come again. These were the words that fell on the ear. And a little later still we find Paul preaching in Jerusalem and in Damascus and in Asia Minor, "Jesus was the Messiah; though he was crucified, he has risen again; he has ascended to the Father; he will come in the clouds very speedily — no one knows how soon — to establish his Messianic kingdom." This was the message of the first preachers of the Christian Church.

Now comes one of the most important questions con-

nected with this whole life of Jesus, perhaps the most important of all,— the one that I now ask you sincerely and simply, without prejudice one way or the other, to face: How does it happen that these discouraged, broken, scattered disciples come together again, that they are full of hope, that they believe and assert that Jesus is alive, that he has ascended to heaven, that he will come back again to establish his kingdom? How did it happen, I say, that such a belief as this arose? You are aware of course that the popular answer to this for hundreds of years has been that the veritable body of Jesus did leave the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and that he appeared to his disciples and talked with them, gave directions concerning what they were to do, then in their sight rose into heaven in the very body that he had worn during the thirty years of his life on earth, and that he is to appear again in the clouds. This, I say, is the ordinary answer that is given to this question. Let us look now for a moment, and see what we must think and believe about it.

I purpose first, without expressing any opinion of my own, simply to give you the argument, so far as we can get at it, of the early Church. The triple tradition to which I have so many times referred — that is, the story of Jesus in which Mark, Matthew, and Luke all agree — says nothing about any miraculous return to life or any ascension into heaven. This is certainly a very striking fact for us to bear in mind. Our first witness, then, in regard to the matter, is Paul. For you must remember distinctly — to untangle this snarl and confusion as to chronological order that we have in the New Testament — that the stories under the names of Matthew, Luke, and John, did not take their present shape for many, many years after Paul preached and wrote his letters to the churches. Our first witness, then, is Paul. He wrote on the subject about the year 58. Let us glance at his argument

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a moment, and see how much we should consider it to be worth at the present time. It seems that there were people in the church at Corinth who denied the doctrine of the resurrection. It is to answer this state of mind that Paul writes. Here are his arguments. First he says, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen." You see he does not give any proof that Christ is risen. "If Christ is not risen," he says next, "your faith is vain." Thirdly, "If Christ is not risen, we are false witnesses, because we say he is." Next, "If Christ is not risen, they who have died in this faith have perished." That is, the popular belief at the time was that those who died before Jesus appeared in the clouds would be raised again, so that they might participate in his triumph and kingdom. Paul says, If he is not risen at all, why, then, those people that have died in this expectation have perished. Then it seems to have been the custom at this time, if a person had not been baptized before he died, to have some one else baptized in his stead, as a sort of proxy. Paul refers to this, and says, "If Jesus is not risen, then those persons that have been baptized for the dead have been doing a useless thing." And then he says, furthermore, "If he is not risen, why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" Briefly, there is the substance of all that Paul says in the way of argument upon the subject, — everything. And yet I need not say any more about it than that no one at the present time would consider it in the light of an argument at all.

Pass over that, then, and let us see the strength of Paul's testimony as to the resurrection. Of course I am speaking now from the stand-point of the theory that Jesus' body came back again from the grave,— the popular modern idea. I shall have something further to say on that before I am through. Here is Paul's testimony, which I give you in detail: first, he says, "Jesus died, was buried, and rose

again the third day"; secondly, "He was seen by Peter"; thirdly, "Then the whole twelve saw him"; fourth, "Then he was seen by above five hundred brethren at once"; fifth, "Then James saw him." And right here let me show you a little fragment of tradition concerning this seeing of Jesus on the part of James, that you may note the kind of atmosphere we are in. This tradition, the fragment of a lost gospel, goes on to tell us that James, the brother of Jesus, was present at the last supper. Of course we know that he was not. He was not one of the twelve, and we know from all sources that only twelve were present. It says that James there took an oath that he would never taste any more bread until he had seen Jesus again; and that the first thing that Jesus did after the resurrection was to appear to James with a loaf in his hand, and assure him that he might now eat, for he had actually risen. Then, again, Paul says that he was seen by all the apostles; and last of all by himself. Now it would seem as though we had personal, unimpeachable, authentic testimony here; for Paul distinctly says that Jesus was seen by all these different persons, and last of all he says he saw him himself.

Now we should feel compelled to give such evidence as this a great deal of weight, were it not for the last clause of the testimony. Perhaps you have never noticed it or seen its significance. Let me call your attention to it then. How was it that Paul saw Jesus? What does he mean by his seeing him? So far as we know, he had never seen Jesus at all in the flesh. He does not claim to have seen him between the resurrection and the ascension. It is only a long time after the ascension, when he is on his way to Damascus, that he says he saw Jesus. And how did he see him then? He saw a vision; that is, Paul's seeing Jesus was merely a mental or subjective vision. He has a waking

dream of seeing him. And this story of the vision is mixed up with hopeless contradictions. One of the accounts says that the attendants of Paul saw a light, but heard nothing of the voice that is said to have spoken. The other account says they heard the voice, but saw nothing.

And what kind of a man in regard to the matter of visions was this Paul who says he saw Jesus? We know from his own account that he was one who was given, in a most wonderful and extraordinary degree, to seeing visions. He tells us that he had such an abundance, such a multitude, of these supernatural revelations, that it was necessary for God to send him some sort of an affliction — "a messenger of Satan," "a thorn in the flesh" — to keep down his spiritual pride. He tells us that on a certain day he was caught up into the third heaven, and saw there wonderful sights and heard things that it was not lawful for him to tell about. And he relates all this as though it were the same kind of matter-of-fact, every-day reality as his visit to Antioch or preaching in Rome. Paul, then, was a man given to the seeing of extraordinary visions. And it never occurred to him to doubt the objective reality of these, any more than of any ordinary occurrence in his every-day life. If, then, his seeing of Jesus was only a vision, we are driven almost of necessity to question whether the similar seeing on the part of the others of whom he tells us was not also a vision.

Did they have any reason for coming into this exalted and ecstatic state of mind? The disciples must have believed that Jesus would appear again. It was a necessity of their condition and of their faith. One of the fundamental principles of Jewish belief was that an ignominious death was a sign of the reprobation and wrath of God. And so Paul speaks of Jesus hanging on the "accursed" tree. It was an accursed thing to be put to death among the Jews; and they

could not believe that Jesus — this simple, humble, loving, divine soul — was worthy of the reprobation of God. They thought there must be some other way of explaining it. They believed firmly that he was the Messiah. If he was the Messiah, then he must come again, he could not be really dead. And then they began to look over the old prophecies, as we find by more than one intimation, and to read them in a new light, to see here and there hints that the Messiah might possibly suffer. For we know that these beliefs were all in the air ; and they said : " He was the Messiah. For some inscrutable reason, God suffered him to be put to death ; but he is not dead, and he will come again to demonstrate that he was the Messiah." And then they picked up fragments of his sayings about his suffering and his rising again, and out of these grew an excited, expectant state of mind. And it needed then how much to start a belief of his appearance? Only a fancy, a rumor that somebody somewhere had seen him, and it would spread like wild-fire all over the country, and their hope would flame up anew and their enthusiasm burn with an unquenchable fire.

This matter of visions I must dwell upon just a moment longer, to make it clear. The Jews at this time believed that a dream was a reality. You must remember that they had no sort of knowledge of this wondrous brain structure of ours, these marvellous nervous systems that can so exalt and sometimes so cheat us. Anything that they saw, or thought they saw, they at once gave objective reality to. It was a necessity of their state of mind, and of that stage of the education of the human race. They knew no other way of explaining it. We know to-day perfectly well that there may be as many visions that have no external reality corresponding to them as there are that have: there are cases, hundreds and thousands of them, in all the nations of the world and

throughout history. If De Quincey had lived in the first century instead of the eighteenth, his visions that he saw under the influence of opium would have been taken as a revelation. Goethe, the great German poet, had the power, not only of seeing visions, but of actually calling them up at will: so that he could create objective forms in his own room, and sit there quietly and study them, and then dismiss them when he was through. Cases like these are common. Only let me give you one more illustration. In the sixteenth century lived one of the most famous of Italian artists of the Renaissance, Benvenuto Cellini, who wrote his own life,—an entertaining and wonderful biography,—giving an account of his paintings, of his sculpture, of his travels, of his quarrels, of his jealousies, of his loves. And in the midst of this biography he tells us of the most wonderful visions and revelations. And he tells them with the same matter-of-fact sense of reality with which he speaks of going to Rome or painting a portrait. For example, on a certain occasion, he goes with a magician to the Colosseum in Rome; a magical powder is cast upon some burning coals, and suddenly the whole amphitheatre is filled with devils. He tells us again — though he was not much of a saint — that during a part of his life his head, at morning and evening, was surrounded by a halo. He tells us also, with a veritable sense of reality, of seeing a marvellous vision of the sun; and out of this sun comes Jesus, the glorified, followed by the Virgin Mary; and then the whole court of heaven is open to his view. And he tells all this as simple matter of fact, showing what the best educated men were capable of believing and telling even so late as the sixteenth century. All through history, anywhere and everywhere, you will find illustrations of this. It has been very easy for a man to see a vision; and, when he has seen it, it is not an uncommon thing for a whole multitude, caught by

the infection, to persuade themselves that they also see it. Now it is a vision of some mighty hero on horseback in the midst of the battle; then of a cross in the heavens, such as was seen by the whole army of Constantine, with the words *In hoc signo vince* — "By this sign conquer" — written in the sky. History is full of these things. I cannot stop to detail any more of them.

I have not said anything, and shall not at any length, in regard to the stories contained in Matthew, Luke, and John; for, as I have already told you, they grew up at a later day. They are myth, they are legend; and, not only that, they contain improbabilities such that we cannot receive them. Improbabilities did I say? They contain impossibilities. They contradict each other. They contradict Paul. And then the one thing which would discredit them, if nothing else, and put them outside any veritable history that can possibly be believed, is the story of the sudden reappearance and disappearance of Jesus after the resurrection. They tell us that he appeared, a body of flesh, blood, and bone, bearing the scars on his hands, his side, his feet; able to eat and drink and digest like ordinary mortals; telling the disciples that he was not a spirit, but was veritable flesh and bone; and that, being such, he suddenly appears in the midst of the disciples, as suddenly disappears, comes through solid walls and closed doors, and disappears again as mysteriously. This is not merely improbable: it is absolutely impossible, unless we dispute and deny the maxim which lies at the basis of all sanity and all knowledge,— that two bodies cannot possibly occupy the same space at the same time. It does not come within the scope of Omnipotence itself to be absurd. We must dismiss these, then, without any further question.

Men to-day do not continue to believe in the resurrection of the body of Jesus, because it is based upon any thing that

would be called evidence in this nineteenth century; for there really is not a fragment of what would pass as proof in a court of justice in Boston. They continue to believe it, then, for either one or two of the following reasons: first, because they suppose it to be intimately, necessarily, causally connected with their belief in their own immortality; secondly, because they suppose it to be intimately and causally connected with the origin and existence of the Christian Church. The editor of *Scribner's Magazine* for April has put these two positions into such forcible words that I shall avail myself of his own language in stating them to you, and then pass on to consider them. He says, in regard to the first of the above points, that the resurrection of Jesus "is the only open demonstration of the problem of immortality ever vouchsafed to the human race." And then, secondly, in regard to the other point, "The fact that Christianity, as a living and aggressive religion, exists at this moment, is proof positive that Christ rose from the dead. It never would have started, it never could have started, except in the fact of Christ's resurrection." And, further, "There is no man living who can form a rational theory of the genesis and development of Christianity, who does not embrace the resurrection as an initial and essential factor." Those two points it remains for me to notice.

In what relation does the belief in the resurrection of the body of Jesus stand to our faith in immortality? I must not spend many words upon it; but let me tell you in brief, at the outset, that I utterly fail to see that it stands in any vital relation to it at all. Let me tell you what I mean. According to the popular faith, Jesus was an extraordinary, unnatural, supernatural being, whose body rose from a tomb,— not air-tight but an above-ground tomb,— after it had lain there about forty-eight hours; that he was raised by miracle,— by

the power of God. Now, what bearing can that possibly have on the question as to whether the bodies of millions and millions of common people, after they have slept for hundreds and thousands of years, have been dissipated and scattered all over the earth, are to be collected together again, and raised up in the flesh? That one extraordinary, supernatural man, eighteen hundred years ago, was raised from the dead after sleeping forty-eight hours, can hardly be regarded, by sober, earnest thinkers, as conclusive proof that everybody else — not extraordinary and not supernatural — is going to be raised again in bodily form after having been dust for hundreds and thousands of years. The belief in a bodily resurrection is hardly held to-day by intelligent people. It cannot be; for the obstacles are utterly insuperable to any one who tries to understand what it means. If you want to believe it, you had better not think about it. This body of mine, for example, in a few years will have gone back to earth; it will in the next few hundreds or thousands of years have become a part of one, ten, fifty, one hundred, possibly one thousand other human bodies. Whose body, then, shall claim the fragments on the day of the resurrection? The difficulties surrounding it are insuperable, and we will not stop even to discuss them.

But the doctrine is not held in this shape to-day, you will say. We believe not that the body is to be raised again from the grave; but the belief has changed its form, and now we trust that the soul does not die at all, but simply continues to live in spite of the death of the body. But this, you must remember, was not at all the belief which was held in the first century. They believed that this kingdom of God was to be here on earth with its centre at Jerusalem; and of course any one who was to partake of it and be a citizen of that kingdom must be raised from the dead and clothed

again with his body within a very few years. What bearing, then, does the supernatural raising up of the body in one instance, eighteen hundred years ago, have upon our faith, not in the raising up of our bodies, but in the continued existence of the soul? A very little superficial thought even will show you that there is no sort of logical or rational relation between the two supposed facts at all.

But we must now come to face that other question,—one of immense importance, and one that I want to put clearly before your mind. The editor of *Scribner's Monthly* tells us that there is no rational way of accounting for Christianity, unless we believe in the popular doctrine of the resurrection. And here I come to a point that I have had in mind all the way through, but that I could not bring out with clearness to you until I had disposed of the doctrine as it is held in other forms. Now we are ready to face the question as to what Paul and his immediate fellow-disciples really believed and taught. If you will go back and read the records with a little care, you will find that Paul does not say anything about any belief in the raising of Jesus from the grave, his resurrection from death, or the resurrection of his body. He does not allude to either of these things. What does he allude to? The doctrine that Paul held and preached was the resurrection of Jesus "*from the dead.*" And that means, as we shall see in a moment, something very different from what we have all this time been talking about. That which has come to be called the Apostles' Creed, but which, so far from having been the workmanship of the Apostles, did not come into its present shape for two or three hundred years after Christ, contains the absurd dogma, which is repeated in the churches of Christendom to-day, of "the resurrection of the body." This, as I am telling you, was not the original doctrine at all. In order to understand this, we must have

clearly before us what the Jews believed about the universe and the destiny of human souls. For the sake of putting it before you in the words of another, so that you may see that it is not simply my own idea, I want to read to you a brief description of the Jewish universe. It is from a work recently published, by a leading and scholarly professor of the Shemitic languages and literature in Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. He says: —

> The writers of Scripture believed and tell us in their writings that the earth was a plane surface, square in form, supported at each corner by pillars resting on the rocky bed of the sea which surrounded it; that its geographical centre was Judea and Jerusalem; that underneath it was an enormous cavern called Sheol, through which flitted the shades of the departed; that the vault above was a cube of metal placed like a tent-cover over the earth, and fastened down at its corners; that to this cover all the heavenly bodies were attached, and on it they moved around for the gratification or benefit of the earth, which was the centre and reason of the whole creation; that in this overhanging arch there were windows, through which, when opened, there descended the rain or snow from their storehouses just above.

You must remember, then, that in a universe like this they all believed. They supposed that the souls of the departed went down into this Sheol. In the earliest ages, they did not believe in any vital, conscious existence at all: it was only an underground, shadowy, semi-conscious state they were in. This was not peculiar to the Jews: it is the belief of antiquity. Let me read to you just a fragment from the translation of the *Iliad* by Mr. Bryant. Achilles is represented as speaking to Ulysses there in the world of the departed,— in Hades; and he says: —

> . . . "Noble Ulysses, speak not thus of death,
> As if thou could'st console me. I would be
> A laborer on earth, and serve for hire
> Some man of mean estate who makes scant cheer,
> Rather than reign o'er all who have gone down
> To death." . . .

The Greeks believed that the dead lived in Hades, — this underground twilight world. The Romans believed it. The whole ancient world believed that only heroes, demigods, special favorites of the deities, ever went on high, to Olympus, to heaven. The Jews did not believe that anybody except Enoch and Elijah had gone to heaven, in the modern sense of the term. Heaven was the court of God, where he sat on his throne, surrounded by angels. All the dead from Adam down to Jesus had gone down into this underground cavern, Sheol. And this has been the traditional doctrine of the Church from that day almost to this. Only a few years ago, Mr. Edward H. Bickersteth published a poem called "Yesterday, To-day, and Forever," in which he places all the dead in this under-abode. He does not undertake to locate it as they did in ancient times, because the astronomer has taken away the old conception of the universe. But, in his poem, none of the dead are ascended : none of them are to ascend until after the general resurrection and judgment. The good and the bad, then, are down here somewhere in this under-abode. Dante teaches very much the same. His Hell is in the centre of the earth, and here are the dead. And the doctrine of Jesus having descended into hell had taken such hold in all Christendom, in Dante's time, that in his journey through hell he comes to the very place where the stone wall of an embankment had been jarred asunder and broken by the earthquake that took place at the time of Jesus' resurrection. He went down into hell, and set free a host of the spirits in prison. This, then, was the belief of the ancient world. But few had gone to heaven. Our idea of simply a continued existence of the soul and of a future life in heaven is a purely modern idea : it does not get one single word of countenance from Christianity. If you think that you are basing your hope of a continued existence imme-

diately after death, and an ascension into heaven, on Christianity, you are utterly mistaken. Christianity does not teach any such doctrine anywhere.

What, then, did Paul believe? He taught "the resurrection of the dead": but what did he mean by it? He did not go to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea to see if there was any body there. It would never occur to the disciples at that time to see whether the body of Jesus had risen. They had no interest in his body. The resurrection of the dead, in their mind, did not depend at all on the question whether his body had risen or not. The resurrection of the dead meant simply this, then: that Jesus was not shut up in Sheol among the multitudes of the common dead that were there imprisoned. It meant that he had escaped from Hades; that he had ascended, had gone into heaven, was sitting at God's right hand, and would come again to establish his Messianic throne on earth. This was what the resurrection of the dead meant to the disciples. Do you not see how utterly different it is from the modern perversion and corruption of the original idea? It meant only as much as we would mean to-day, when, standing over the dead body of a friend, we should say: "He is not dead; he cannot be dead; he is alive. We do not bury him; he has gone up on high." This was the only doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus held or preached by the early Church. Of course it was necessary that *this* should be believed before there could be any Christianity. The Church could not spring out of a grave, or from a belief in a dead Jesus. The Church had its birth in the belief that he was alive, that he was coming again to establish his kingdom; and that is the gospel that they went preaching all over the world. And you will notice in these early sermons it was not the propitiation for our sins, it was not his grave, it was not his death

that was the most important. The one thing which Paul puts in the forefront as of more significance than anything else was the resurrection. Jesus is the Messiah; he is alive — this is the great informing, inspiring faith of the early Church.

And now we must just glance a moment at how many a parallel this belief has in the world. If you think it pertains simply to Jesus, you are mistaken. Thousands of years before Christ, in Egypt, the doctrine had grown up that Horus, the son of a god and a virgin, had lived until he was twenty-eight years of age, was put to death in a struggle with Typhon,— the Devil, the Prince of Evil,— that he was raised again from the dead, and was made king of all the departed souls. This belief in the disappearance and return again of some hero who has come for the deliverance of man has not been confined to any age or to any nation. You find it in ancient India. To come to comparatively modern times, it was believed concerning Nero; it was believed concerning Charlemagne, concerning King Arthur, concerning Merlin, concerning the sun-god of the Aztecs of Mexico, and Hiawatha, the great hero of the northern tribes of Indians. It has been believed even in the most modern times concerning Napoleon I. There is a religious sect alive to-day who believe that Napoleon is not dead, that he has only disappeared in the Far East, and that by and by he is coming back to conquer and rule the earth again. This belief, then, I say, is wide-spread and common, and is simply an illustration of the saying of the poet, that

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

We cannot believe that our great hopes have died. They spring up again by the law of their very nature, for they are immortal; and we must look forward to something grander yet to be.

The whole New Testament, if you will read it in the light of what I have said, you will find all alive with the expectation of this coming. Paul teaches that Jesus is to come before those that were then living should die. And he comforts some of the friends of those who have died, by telling them they are not to be troubled, for, when Jesus comes, they will be raised again to life, and be permitted to share in the glory of his Messianic reign. And the last book of the New Testament — as it stands to-day, the Revelation — is all alive and on tiptoe with this expectation. Everywhere, all through, throbs the belief that Jesus is coming quickly. And you find, as you read the history of the canon of the New Testament, that, after their expectation had been disappointed and Jesus did not come, this book was discredited, and came very near being thrown out of the Bible. But, after a time, it was reinstated again. As late as the year 1000, all Europe was thrilled and convulsed with the expectation of the immediate coming of Jesus; and men went so far as to put away their property, and to do all sorts of things in the way of getting ready. And, from that day to this, the old belief occasionally — in sublime or ridiculous fashion — flames out again. You remember only two or three years ago there was a Convention of all the Evangelical Churches of America in New York, to take up and treat this subject; and leading men in all the churches expressed their belief that Jesus might be expected to return any day. And yet — so vital is a baseless superstition when once it is in possession of the imaginations of men — Jesus himself, who ought to be regarded as authority on the subject, says that this coming is to be before the generation to which he was then speaking had passed away.

These, then, are the facts, so far as we can find them, concerning the story of the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

This discussion does not touch the question of our immortality one way or the other. Our hope and our faith do not rest upon any of these things. All nations, even those who lived hundreds and thousands of years before Jesus was born, have believed in immortality. The belief has never been so vigorous and so real among any people under heaven as it was in ancient Egypt. It is a belief that springs out of the human heart; and I, for one, trust that it is the whisper of the eternal truth of God.

THE MESSIANIC IDEA.

Any series of talks about Jesus, however brief or fragmentary, that should forget to treat the Messianic idea in its bearing upon his life and teaching, would be fatally defective. For, however strange the statement may seem to some of you that have not studied it and looked into its bearings, it is unquestionably true that but for the Messianic idea, wrought out and organized by the thought, the genius, and the energy of Paul, there would have been no historic, instituted Christianity in the world. This Messianic idea, then, is all-important; and yet the thought of its reality, of its significance, has almost faded out of the modern mind. Except on the part of a very few narrow-minded and bigoted among the Hebrews, the literal expectation of the fulfilment of their old national hope has long since passed away. Many of them mean by it only the general progress and development of mankind. Some of them hold that the Jewish race personified is God's Messiah to the world, holding up among the nations the conception of the unity and the moral perfection of God; and that this is the mission of their race. When we come among Christians, and ask what they still believe about the Messiah, we find that there is, underneath the surface, a smouldering belief in the original New Testament idea; and that, if the oxygen of certain conditions of thought can only get access to it, this latent faith is ready to flame up in a

nineteenth century enthusiasm almost as vivid and real as that of the first. But, on the part of most Christians, the belief in any literal coming of Jesus, unless it be by and by, in some very indefinite future, at the end of the world, is entirely surrendered. And on the part of many of them, as it finds utterance in sermon, in song, in hymn, in poem, it has come to be transformed into the idea that, when each believer dies, Jesus, in some figurative way, comes to him then.

The second coming of Christ, then, has almost passed out of the thought of the modern world, in any real and literal sense; and yet once it was the most vital thing in Christianity. There are two main questions that we must now consider; and my purpose is simply to place these as clearly as I can before you, and answer them as concisely as possible.

It has been the standing charge of Christendom against the Jewish people that they wilfully and wickedly rejected and cast out their own Messiah, the one that they had been for a long time expecting; and that, if they had been willing to have known the truth, they had light enough to teach them what they were doing. And this charge has grown to such stupendous and incomprehensible proportions, that there have been those among the leading thinkers of the world, and those by hundreds, who have even charged this Jewish race with the one grandest crime that the human mind can conceive,— of even putting to death God himself. Only now and then do men stop to see what the logic of their common belief is. But only a few years ago I was reading a sermon of Mr. Beecher's, in which he went this length of clearly and simply saying that, when the Jews put Jesus to death on the cross, God died. This, then, must be the first question for us to consider,— as to whether Jesus did really fulfil the Messianic expectation of the Jews in any

such realistic sense as to have given the people of his time a reason for knowing that he was veritably their Messiah.

In order to answer this question, I must ask you to go back with me, and trace for a moment the origin and development of this Messianic idea,—to see what it was, in its simplest and plainest outline, which the Jews really believed. We cannot go back so far as the time of Abraham; for his history and the words that are put into his mouth were written many hundreds of years after his death. But it is sufficient for us to take note that the Jewish nation believed, with all the intensity of earnest conviction, that God had veritably appeared to Abraham,—that he had entered into a personal covenant with him, had promised him, as the reward of his faithfulness, that he should be the father of his own chosen, peculiar people; that this people should be perpetually prosperous, that they should dominate the whole earth, and that through them all the nations of the world should be blessed. Right here, in this one belief, we shall find the seed and root of the Messianic idea. The Jews then believed that they were the chosen, peculiar people of Yahweh, the national god; they believed that the sign of his blessing was outward prosperity. There is no indication in their earlier writings of any thought of a future life beyond the grave. The highest blessing they pronounce upon obedience to Yahweh is long life, great wealth, many children, peace, and general prosperity. Precisely similar things in their thought constituted the highest welfare of the people. They believed, then, that they were a chosen people, and that as being such there was to spread out before them, in all coming time, a kingdom in perpetuity of blessing and peace and dominion over all the world. If there came to the Jews, then, any calamity or trial, they must explain it consistently with this underlying, foundation principle. It

could not mean that Yahweh had turned away his favor from them forever: it must mean only a temporary and local chastisement, in preparation for some larger triumph, that was yet to be. So, if you read the prophets and writings of the Jews all through, you will find the key to everything in this one principle that I have given you, — the belief that they were the chosen people, and that, however they might be cast down temporarily, ultimately their destiny must be one of triumph, of peace, and of dominion over all the nations of the world. When, then, their land was overrun by the heathen, when the city of Jerusalem itself was taken, when the temple was destroyed, and the flower of the nation was carried off into captivity in Babylon, did they give up their hope? Not at all. So long as they believed in Yahweh, they could not surrender it. These disappointments were indeed mysterious; and yet Yahweh had some ultimate purpose in them, and out of this degradation there was to spring at last a triumph that would be glorious. So we find in the midst of their captivity this religious belief existing; and there never was a time in their whole history when the religious life was so active, and when it budded and flowered out into such heautiful blooms, as during this time of their oppression by a foreign power. As we get down toward the time of Christ, and as calamities thicken upon the people, as they pass now under the dominion of one kingdom and now under that of another, suffering famine and persecution and trial of every kind, we find this hope, this belief in the Messianic idea, only growing stronger and more intense, and ready to flame out into the wildest enthusiasm on the smallest possible provocation. Messiah after Messiah appears, each one claiming to be sent by their national god. Book after book is written, setting forth the nature of this Messianic kingdom. We find only the poorest and feeblest hints

of what this was to be in our canonical Old Testament. From the time when the Book of Daniel was written, down through the writing of the Book of Enoch, the Book of Baruch, the Book of Jesus the son of Sirach, the Book of Tobit, the Book of Jubilees, the Psalms of Solomon, and many others, we find this Messianic hope pictured in all the strongest and wildest outlines and all the most brilliant colors. Book after book was written and put out under the name of some of the great names of the past, that they might carry influence among the people, and thus encourage them in the days of their distress and despair, and prepare them for the day of their prosperity, which they believed to be near at hand. Such was the mental condition of the Jews, such was the religious idea of the time when Jesus is born, and proclaims himself the coming Messiah, who is to fulfil the hopes of his nation.

Now I wish, in just as brief a way as I can, to give you a picture of what it was that the Jews expected. But you must bear one thing in mind. If somebody should go out from here to Europe, and report that the people of Boston believed so and so, you will see at once that such a statement as that would need important modification. All the people of Boston cannot agree as to this particular thing or that in their belief. And yet it is perfectly safe to say that there are certain principles, certain prominent sentiments, which are practically universal, and characteristic of the city. So when we talk about the Messianic expectation of the Jews, we must not think that everybody in Jerusalem and Judea held precisely the same ideas, and pictured the future under precisely the same forms. There were many forms of the Messianic idea floating in the public mind at this time. And yet there are certain main outlines which are easily discernible, concerning which a majority of the people were agreed. It is these, then, that I must call your attention to.

In the first place, the Jews divided all time into two great epochs or divisions: one was what you will find referred to in the New Testament as "the present time," — this age, this world. And you must remember, all through the New Testament, when you come across the words "this world," that there is no reference whatever to the planet on which we live, but simply to the then present age or period of time. They divided all time into these two epochs,— the present time and the future, this age and the next age, this world and the next world. And the present time, or this age, was the time preceding the coming of the Messiah, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. And the next age, or next world, was that kingdom in its finished condition and its perpetuity. Some of them believed that there was to be a personal Messiah, and some did not. Some of them looked for this perfect condition of things only as the restoration of their original theocracy before they had a human king, when Yahweh alone was their ruler. But the prevalent idea was that there was to be a personal Messiah, to be Yahweh's vicar on earth, to exercise his authority and sit on the throne of David. They believed that this Messiah was to come in the line of David, and that the kingdom was to be a continuation of his authority and dynasty. The reason for this was simple. David was the first one of their kings who unified and established their national power, and gave them peace and safety in the midst of their enemies; and, although the kingdom of Solomon was in some respects more glorious and wide-spread than that of David, yet Solomon himself departed from many of the Jewish customs and laws, and thus fell into disrepute among the priesthood. So that David became their ideal king; and they could conceive no higher or better destiny for them in the future than that a king like David, of his line, should come to restore his

throne and kingdom, and reign in his name and his glory forever.

The Jews generally believed that the Messianic kingdom was to be ushered in by awful portents. We find them pictured in some of the prophets; we find them graphically and wildly outlined in the apocalyptic literature of the time; we find them in the words of Jesus himself. And here you must remember, for clearness of thought, that all the figures and colors that Jesus uses in describing the things that are to happen before his second coming are borrowed from the popular pictures and the popular literature of the time. We can find them all in the apocalyptic books. They believed that the sun was to be darkened, and that the moon was to be turned into blood; the stars were to fall from heaven; there were to be earthquakes and pestilences in various places; wars and rumors of wars, nation rising up against nation; a time of affliction such as the world had never seen until that day,— all this was to usher in the Messianic kingdom, these were to be the premonitory symptoms of its coming. They believed that the dead, the faithful, believing dead, of the past, were to rise again. That is, all those that had been faithful Jews were to have a part in this coming glory; and, according to their conceptions of the universe, the only way by which they could picture the possibility of this realization was by supposing that these were to be raised from this under-world of Sheol, and become citizens of the earth again in this Messianic kingdom.

And, when this kingdom came, what were to be its characteristics? There was to be no more war; wild beasts were to become tame; health was to be universal; sickness and sorrow to be done away; the world was to become supernaturally fruitful. As an illustration, let me give you a quotation from one of the most famous apocalyptic books. This

is an example of what they believed would be general in regard to the products of the earth. They said concerning the vine that "one vine should have on it a thousand branches, and every branch a thousand bunches, and every bunch a thousand grapes; and every grape should be large enough to produce a whole measure of wine." They believed that the wind, as it blew over the tops of the grain, would sift out fine flour ready for people to gather and make into bread. All the way through they pictured in the most gorgeous colors the glorious condition of this perfected kingdom of their Messiah. These simply as some general outline and indication of what they believed. It is this Messianic dream, and not "heaven," or the condition of things in eternity, that you may see pictured in the Book of Revelation — one of the class of apocalyptic writings.

Did Jesus bear any of the signs of the kind of Messiah that the Jews had been taught by all their sacred writings for generations to expect? If you say he proved to the Jews his Messiahship by his supernatural birth, we must answer that the supernatural birth was not heard of for many long years after his death. If you say that he proved it by his miracles, we must answer that miracles were very common and had been very common throughout the whole history of the Jews, and had been wrought by many men that were not Messiahs and had not claimed to be. If you say that he proved it by his power over the demons, even Jesus himself admits that many Jews of his own time beside himself had this same power of exorcising evil spirits. If you say it was his moral teaching that proved his Messiahship, we must again confess that the finest and sublimest moral teachings of Jesus are only the sublimated essence of the teaching of the best and highest Jews of his own age.

Jesus came, then, not as their Messiah. There were none

of those portents and signs in the heavens, indicating to the Jews that he was the Messiah. And, when they came to him and asked him for a sign, he refused to give it. We must confess, then, as we candidly look over the history, that Jesus did not bear about him a single one of the marks by which the Jews expected to know their Messiah when he came. And, however great the crime of putting to death a character so sublime, so pure, so noble, as was that of Jesus of Nazareth, Christendom must hang its head in shame, and confess that the Church, in the name of this same Jesus, has committed hundreds of crimes quite as infamous; has put to death, with quite as cruel tortures, men that were very like him whom they, at the same time, called their Master and Lord. Jesus was not, then, in any comprehensible sense to us, as we look back over history, the fulfilment of the Jewish Messianic expectation.

Let us now pass to our second question; and you will find that it is intimately connected with this, and springs vitally out of it. The disciples themselves confessed to the Jews at that time that Jesus did not fulfil their national hope. They themselves held precisely the same expectation that their fellow-countrymen did. How, then, did they believe that Jesus was the Messiah? They did not believe that he had come as yet as the Messiah, but only that he was thus to come. The one single point that separated Christians from the Jews, at the first, was simply here: the Jews denied that Jesus was coming again as the Messiah, and the Christians asserted it. That was the one sole distinction between the disciple of Jesus and the ordinary Jew in Jerusalem during the first few years after the crucifixion.

Pass then to our second question. To what extent and in what way has the belief, on the part of the disciples, that Jesus was the Messiah, reshaped, remodelled, and colored the

facts as to his life and teaching? You must remember here, in order to a clear understanding of the point I wish to make, that the biographies of Jesus, and all the notices we have of him in the New Testament, were not written for many, many years after his death. You must remember that it was the fundamental belief of the disciples that Jesus was to come, in the immediate future, in fulfilment of the national Messianic hope of the Jews. You will very readily see then that under the influence of this belief it would be very natural, inevitable even, that the story of Jesus' life should have become colored by this belief. Look for a moment at the circumstances. Nothing as yet had been written about Jesus. It was simply a tradition floating in the popular mind that he had done this thing, that he had said that, on a certain occasion. We find in the Gospels themselves no chronological order,—only mingled, blended, and sometimes contradictory traditions, just as they were floating in the popular mind. The disciples believed with their whole soul — for this was the one thing, the only thing, that made them Christians — that this Jesus was to appear again. Do you not see, then, that it was inevitable that they should suppose that Jesus had done certain things and had said certain things which they believed the Messiah must do and must say? The Messiah, when he is born, the popular belief said, must do such and such things, must say such and such things; and he will not be the Messiah unless he does. The next step. Jesus was the Messiah, and has revealed himself as such. Then of course he must have done the things that the Messiah was to do, he must have said the things that the Messiah was to say. And they were spurred to this by another consideration. The one grand thing which the early preacher of Christianity set out to do was to convince the Jews that Jesus was the "Christ"— that is, the Messiah. For you

must remember that Christ in the New Testament is always simply the name of the office, and not the name of the man. To say, then, that Jesus was the Christ was to say that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah; for "Christos" is only the Greek form of the Hebrew word.

Let us now look for a moment, and see to what extent this preconception did really modify, pervert, and color the facts in the life of Jesus. They wrote many years after his death, and with this preconception of what the Messiah ought to say and do in their minds. For example, the belief had grown up, on account of the misconception of one of the old prophesies, that the Messiah was to be born in some extraordinary way. Hence the story of the birth by a virgin. And yet, as I have already told you, go back and study that prophecy, and you will find that it says nothing whatever about any birth by a virgin. It is a pure misunderstanding and perversion of it to get any such meaning out of it. Again, the Messiah must be of the line of David; and, although Jesus himself explicitly refutes this idea, and says that the Messiah need not be of the line of David, yet the popular belief is so strong that even his words are forgotten, and the belief springs up that he was thus born; and, to prove it, the genealogical table finds its place in two of the Gospels. If he was of the line of David and was to inherit his throne, then he must have been born in the city of David, in Bethlehem; and so, in spite of the universal tradition, that points everywhere to Nazareth, the story of the Bethlehem birth becomes the creed of the early Church. And then, by and by, they must explain the fact that the Messiah, so contrary to all the ideas of the time, was crucified. They find in one of the old prophets a passage about the "suffering servant of Yahweh." It is perfectly plain to the most casual reading that the prophet here is referring to Israel personified, the nation as a whole. But

the methods of interpretation in use by the rabbins at this time were such that a passage of Scripture could mean anything that could possibly be tortured out of it. So this is made to apply to and attempt to explain the, at first, stunning fact that the Messiah who came to reign was put to an ignominious death. Then, of course, they could not believe that the Messiah was really held a prisoner in Sheol: he must have escaped, he must be alive. Out of this naturally and easily springs the doctrine of the resurrection. So we find, all the way through, that the facts of the life are rewritten in after time in the light of a preconceived ideal; so that the historic Jesus is almost lost to us, having been reshaped and moulded into the image of the supposed Messiah.

How far did Jesus himself accept the popular Messianic belief? I want to make our consideration of this just as plain to you as possible, because it is very important in the present condition of thought about Jesus and his work. In how far did Jesus share the popular Messianic belief of the time? It is almost impossible for us to decide. If we are to accept the New Testament records as they stand, then he held the simple, popular faith in all its crudeness. He believed that before that generation passed away he himself was to come in the clouds of heaven, surrounded by angels, and establish this kingdom of God on earth. And yet, very strangely, there are also hints of a deeper, more moral teaching, that seems utterly inconsistent with this belief. And we are to remember right here that the Gospels themselves represent the disciples as perpetually misunderstanding Jesus, misinterpreting what he said, taking some figurative, poetic saying of his, and reducing it to a crude, coarse literalness in their interpretation. So that, if we are to doubt the record of the disciples at any point, we must doubt it here; for they would be less liable to invent the

grand spiritual principles and doctrines of Jesus than the cruder ideas which were the common thought of the time. If, then, we are to question any part of it, we will cast aside that which ascribes to Jesus the crude, common, popular belief in regard to the Messianic hope.

And yet, with all the study I have been able to give it, after some years, I am convinced of this,— that Jesus did believe that there was to be a miraculous and sudden establishment of the Messianic kingdom; but the one grand thing where he outran his time, where he towered unspeakably above it, was as to the method of preparation for this coming kingdom which he held and preached. The Jews of his time, almost universally, said we must get ready for the coming of this Messianic kingdom by keeping the law with more and more minuteness and strictness; we must get ready for it by following more carefully the traditions; we must be more careful about washing our tables and our cups, about burnishing the brazen vessels and looking after the condition of the altar; we must get ready for it by being careful how far we walk on the Sabbath day, what sort of sandal we wear as we walk through the grass, how we shall wash our hands, as to which hand we shall pour the water into first,— whether it shall be by pouring it above the wrist and letting it run down on to the hand, or by pouring it upon the hand and letting it run up to the wrist. It was questions like these that Jesus found the rabbis disputing about, thinking that on such contemptible hinges as these might turn the coming of the glorious kingdom of God. For the Jews at this time had frittered away the intellect of their nation on these feeble subtleties and infinitesimal disputes; just as we find the great theologians of the Middle Ages, for example, disputing over such weighty matters as to how many disembodied spirits might dance together upon the

point of a needle. It was to such questions as these that the mind of the Jewish nation was turned.

What does Jesus say? In the clearest and most emphatic manner, in a way that cannot be outgrown, that never will be outgrown,—for it is an ideal as grand and comprehensive as the horizon, and in the midst of which humanity may progress forever without outrunning it,— Jesus taught that the way to get ready for the coming of the kingdom of God was by inward, spiritual, and moral goodness, by love to God and love to man. And, with one wave of his mighty, gentle hand, he brushed their subtleties and ritualisms and absurdities to the winds. Jesus held that the way to get ready for this coming kingdom was by the way of meekness, by purity of heart, by loving kindness, by love to our fellow-men, by all things that make us like our highest ideal of God, and that bring us into the most perfect relationship to our fellow-men. *And this is the eternal part of the work of Jesus.*

What do we believe to-day about this Messianic kingdom? That old vision of the Jews has faded away, and is now treated by the thoughtful and intelligent world only as a dream, which takes its place along with Plato's "Republic," with More's "Utopia," with Sidney's "Arcadia," with the highest thoughts and aspirations of the best minds of time; as one form of the dream of human progress, one form of the belief in the possible perfectibility of human society. The form, then, in which Jesus and his age held the Messianic dream has passed away. In what sense, then, are we his successors? In what sense do we hold the essential teachings of Jesus? We stand where the advancing ranks of humanity must always stand, if they are to continue to advance, on this essential, underlying, eternal principle of love to God and love to man. But is this enough? Grand as it is, I think not. It needs to be supplemented by that which is the pecu-

liar quality and characteristic of this age in which we live. It needs to be supplemented by that which is just as divine as the thought of Jesus himself, the high thought which the Church has been vilifying and casting out and crucifying again, as though it were a new Messiah ; it needs to be supplemented, in order that the perfect kingdom of humanity may come, by the work and the results of science. Let me illustrate to you just what I mean, and how much. A steam-engine in the hold of a ship is absolutely essential to its progress ; and yet it is not enough. Which way shall it move, on to the rocks or toward the harbor? Before this can be settled, there must be the helm, the compass, the chart. In other words, the work of science must come in as the light to guide and tell the mariner his way. The steam in a locomotive is absolutely essential to the propulsion of the train, but that is not enough. There must be scientific engineering to lay out and make solid the track, and there must be intelligence like a locomotive head-light shining out into the darkness to show the way, to reveal the fact that the signals are all in their places and that the path is clear.

It is not enough, then, to do what Jesus did, and to tell the world that they must love God and love their fellow-men. There must come — what this age is developing, and what will be for its future and everlasting glory — an answer to the question, what and how. Love God? Yes. But what is it to love him? Obey God? Yes, absolutely. But what and where are God's laws that we need to obey? Here is the work of investigation. Here come in the methods and the results of science,— the laws of God everywhere, in the stars and the sea-depths, in the planets and the atoms, in our bodies and brains, in society, politics, everywhere. It is the work of science to investigate as to what the laws of God are, to verify them, and furnish us a knowledge of

causes and results. Then comes in the eternal principle of the spirit of Jesus as the motive power of religion, to lead on the human race to its ultimate triumph over all the obstacles of the world.

We must love man? Yes; but how love him, how manifest that love? The Church, for many ages, has been devoting itself to giving its conceptions of the truth to the service of men. The Catholic Church, for instance, has not been purposely going counter to the welfare of humanity. It has been doing what it believed to be for the salvation of the world. But for lack of science, for lack of light, for lack of investigation, for lack of listening to the divine, God-spoken words of human experience, its tender mercy has been cruelty, its pity has many a time created poverty and pestilence and crime, its best methods and best endeavors have resulted in disaster, in aggravating evils it sought to abate.

We need, then, not simply the propulsive power of the love of God and man, which is the essential spirit and the very heart of Jesus. We need also the light of the intellect and the results of the experience of the human race. These shall furnish us our machinery; and the love that Jesus taught shall be the motive power. And so, on the track marked out, and led by science, the love of God and man shall drag on the train of every human improvement. I believe that the Messianic dream of the Jews was only one form of the dream that we to-day ought to cherish. We are infidels, in the only serious sense of that word, if we doubt God, if we doubt the possible perfection of humanity. With whatever colors we paint it, we may have our dream of a good time coming. We may believe that evil is transient, that it can be and ought to be put under foot. We may look forward to the time when the evils of sickness and sorrow and toil and poverty, and the gigantic wrongs that

undermine society and threaten our civilization, shall be wiped out of existence and forgotten. It will not come as Jesus and his disciples expected it, by sudden miracle from heaven. It will come through patient investigation; it will come through the mutual bearing of burdens; it will come through long-continued study and effort. But, if we are faithful to God and to the trust that our fellow-men place in us, then it will appear. "The kingdom of God shall come down out of heaven, and dwell among men; and all tears shall be wiped away. There shall be no more sorrow nor crying, neither any more pain." There shall be no more pestilence, no more hunger. The spirit in which we should labor for its realization let me give you in the words of one of our greatest and most inspiring singers: —

Then to side with truth is noble, when we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

Count we o'er earth's chosen heroes,— they were souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonized for hurled the contumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design.

By the light of burning heretics, Christ's bleeding feet I track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns not back,
And these mounts of anguish number how each generation learned
One new word of that grand Credo, which in prophet-hearts hath burned,
Since the first man stood God-conquered with his face to heaven upturned.

For humanity sweeps onward; where to-day the martyr stands,
On the morrow crouches Judas with the silver in his hands;
Far in front the cross stands ready, and the crackling fagots burn,
While the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe return,
To glean up the scattered ashes into History's golden urn.

They have rights who dare maintain them; we are traitors to our sires,
Smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's new-lit altar-fires.
Shall we make their creed our jailer? Shall we, in our haste to slay,
From the tombs of the old prophets steal the funeral lamps away
To light up the martyr-fagots round the prophets of to-day?

New occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth;
Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we ourselves must pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key.

JESUS AND THE CHURCH: or, WAS JESUS A "CHRISTIAN"?

To THE superficial thinker, who has been accustomed to look upon Jesus as one who came into the world on purpose to plant and develop Christianity, the question as to whether he himself was a Christian may at first seem only captiousness or sensationalism. But it is the farthest possible from either the one or the other. In reality, it is one of the most serious problems with which we can concern ourselves. And so far from its being a plain matter of fact that Jesus came to found and establish the Christian Church, as it has existed during the last eighteen hundred years, a conscientious study may lead us to the conclusion that he had in mind nothing of the sort. Indeed, this point is conclusively settled by the word of Jesus himself, where he says that his kingdom is to be miraculously revealed from Heaven during the generation then living. And, as matter of history, instituted Christianity was not constructed out of the actual life and teachings of Jesus, but was founded by Paul out of the materials of the Jewish Messianic idea, supplemented, enlarged, and completed by the pagan philosophy and mythology of the Orient, of Egypt, and of Greece. It is, then, a pertinent and

important question for us to consider, as to whether Jesus was a Christian.

You will please to bear in mind all through that we are not discussing the question as to whether the points of the popular creed of Christendom are true, but only as to whether Jesus — as represented in the Gospels — held and taught them.

There is one more preliminary point that is very important. Are we to take the recorded words of Jesus as a decisive authority as to what a Christian should do and believe? You may wonder at my asking such a question, or even doubt as to whether I am really serious about it. But, when you have pondered the question well, you will cease to wonder at me, and begin to wonder at the theologians. For the words of Jesus have never been favorite material with the system-builders and theological architects. Go to Princeton or Andover and look over the Scripture texts that are used in the construction of creeds and theological systems, and you will find that very few of them are the words of Jesus. They are chiefly from the Old Testament and from Paul. If one begins to talk much about the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables, he is straightway in danger of being called in question as to the matter of "soundness."

And yet, in spite of the theologians, I shall assume that Jesus knew what he meant, and that, when he knew, he said it, and said it plainly. If, as the churchmen tell us, he came into the world on purpose to teach us the truth that is essential to salvation, it is not very likely that he forgot his errand. If he intended to reveal anything, he probably put it into plain language, or else it is not revealed at all. I think then that we may safely pass by the crowd of self-appointed interpreters,— priests, theologians, and all,— and go straight up to Jesus himself, and take what he believed from his own lips.

If he had no message, or, having one, forgot to deliver it, and left it for Princeton and Andover to tell us about it, then the best thing we can do is to dismiss the whole subject, and go to the Universe,— that is, to God,— first hand, for our laws and guidance.

As we look over history, we find that Christians of every age and of every name — however much they may have differed about other things — have all and always agreed as to two: first, as to the existence of a Church, or kingdom of God: and, secondly, as to there being certain conditions of membership in that Church, or citizenship in that kingdom. And here, at the very outset, we are struck with what seems to be a very remarkable agreement between this common position of Christians and the position of Jesus. For on the very threshold of his career, we find Jesus standing and giving utterance to the proclamation of what he calls "the gospel," — the good news. And what is this gospel? It is twofold, and corresponds apparently to the position of the Church. First, he announces the coming of what he calls "the kingdom of God"; and, secondly, he attaches certain conditions to the attainment of citizenship in that kingdom. If I should stop right here, you might suppose that Jesus and the Church stood on common ground. But, before we can be clear as to whether Jesus and Christianity are at agreement, we must raise and answer the questions, first, as to what they severally mean by "the kingdom of God"; and, secondly, as to whether the conditions of citizenship in this kingdom are the same with Jesus as they are with the Church.

These are the central, essential, pivotal points on which the whole decision must turn. We will take each of the two in their order.

As to the kingdom, then. Do Jesus and the Christian

Church agree here? Partly they do, and partly they do not. We can dispose of this first part of our theme very briefly, and for the sake of clearness will mark off the points.

1. That "the kingdom of God" is coming. Jesus and the Church are here at one.

2. As to the time of its coming. As to this, the Church itself is divided into parties. Some say it is coming gradually all the time, by slow growth. Some say it is coming suddenly, all at once, and may come any day or hour. This opinion is confined chiefly to the small and insignificant sect of "Adventists"; though some leading dignitaries, preachers, and theologians have recently expressed their acceptance of this belief. Jesus taught with the most perfect plainness that it was coming before the end of the generation in which he lived.

Some have attempted to evade the simple meaning of his words, by saying that what he meant by his coming was the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of Judaism. If he meant that, it is pertinent to ask why he did not say it. But the simple matter of fact is that this is only quibbling: it is an after-thought, intended only to evade an otherwise insuperable difficulty. If a man interprets that way, it does not make much difference what he reads: he can make any book mean anything. You can thus make the Bible teach anything you please, except what it says.

3. As to the method of its coming, Jesus teaches that, after the preparation is complete, the kingdom will come suddenly, by miraculous, supernatural revelation in the clouds, with trumpet-blast, throne, and attendant angels. Adventists teach this, as Jesus did, but no others. Others appear to hold a similar belief; but what they really mean is, not that Jesus will thus appear on this earth, but that he will come in this manner at the end of time, and when this globe we inhabit is to be destroyed.

4. As to the king, Jesus teaches that it is to be himself. The Church teaches the same.

5. As to the location of the kingdom, Jesus taught plainly that it was to be here on earth. At first, the Church held the same. But, disappointed in that expectation, the general opinion now is that earth and time will only witness the preparatory stages, and that the real, completed kingdom is to be in the future life of eternity.

So far, then, we find between Jesus and the Church only a partial agreement. On one point, indeed,— that as to the time of his coming,— the disagreement is so great as to become a hopeless contradiction. Well may they echo the old question of the early ages, "Where is the promise of his coming?" For the Church can still look forward to his coming only on the supposition that, in the case of his original promise, he did not know what he said, or else did not say what was true. And, on either supposition, the expectation of his coming now is utterly unreasonable.

On this point, then, we are compelled to decide that Jesus was not a Christian; that is, he did not hold nor teach what the great body of Christendom holds and teaches to-day.

We now pass to consider and compare the conditions of citizenship in "the kingdom of God" as taught by Jesus and as taught by the Christian Church.

Right here we are met with a difficulty. It is a source of confusion and perplexity; and yet it will not seriously embarrass the solution of our problem. The difficulty is this. We have not one church with one condition of membership, but many churches with many conditions. They all claim to stand on the infallible record, and each one denies the interpretations of it on the part of all the others. So that a man who is a good Christian in one part of Christendom may find himself an anti-Christ and an outcast in another

part. The revelation that was taken as a fixed guide-post proves to be more like a weather-vane that points in whatever direction the wind of popular opinion may happen to blow. A Christian in Turkey might not be regarded as a Christian at all in Boston. And even a priest in Italy might be refused any sort of official recognition at Andover. But, though the conditions of church membership and of ecclesiastical salvation are thus widely at variance, there are yet certain fundamental principles or claims in which all churches are alike. For example, whatever the local faith and usage may be, one must accept and conform, if he is to be in "good and regular standing." He must be a church member, hold the prescribed belief, have passed through the proper experience; he must keep the days, observe the sacraments, conform to the rites of worship; he must adopt the Church's standard of judgment concerning social conventions, customs, and amusements. All these may differ at different places and times; but, at whatever time or in whatever place, the demand for conformity is the same.

As concrete illustrations, let us look at some special customs and usages — some of the external forms of Christianity — before we pass to the more important matter as to whether Jesus believed and taught the popular creed of Christendom.

1. The first thing that strikes us is the enormous proportions of the Church as an institution, and the enormous power and domineering authority of the clergy. The kingdom that Jesus everywhere speaks about is simply a loving brotherhood of equal souls. The only authority is that of goodness, and the only greatness that of a more zealous service. "Call no man father, no man master; one is Father and Master, even God." "He that will be great among you, let him serve." "The princes of the nations exercise authority;

but it shall not be so among you." How it has been in the Church, let popes and prelates and bishops and presbyters and priestly "fathers," and councils and synods, and inquisitions and dungeons and axes and fagots and excommunications answer. Church history reads like a satire, a ghastly caricature or horrible burlesque of the simple words and explicit teachings of Jesus.

2. Then note the comparative attitudes of Jesus and the Church as to rites and ceremonies. The only one that can even pretend to claim the sanction of his certain word is the Supper. And this was only to be a memorial for the little while till he came again. He placed no fence around it, and exacted no conditions. Judas sat at the first Supper unchallenged. He baptized no one, and commanded no one else to. He established no prayer-meetings not only, but he even condemned public prayers, directing very brief petitions, and those in private. He commended simple, childlike trust in God, since he loved his children and knew perfectly beforehand what they needed. He slighted the Jewish holy days, and said not one single syllable about any others to take their places. Public humiliation and fast days found no favor with him: all these things should be between the private soul and its God, he said. Jesus visited with his severest condemnation those who placed ceremonial observance above moral goodness. But the Church has almost universally done the precise opposite, stigmatizing morality as "works of the law"; while what the New Testament means by "works" is precisely these observances that the Church exalts. The church doctrine here then, concerning the whole matter of observances, has always and everywhere been in flat contradiction to the express teaching of Jesus.

3. Then in regard to the matter of names and professions. Jesus gives his blessing, not to the one who professes, but to

the one who does. The Church has never had any salvation for those who did not bear the Christian name. Yet the name of Christian was unknown until long after Jesus' death. He refers to the matter of name, to the saying, "Lord, Lord," only to condemn it. And he distinctly says that the man who is not against his spirit, who is doing God's will, is "for us," whether he "followeth us" or not. Were he on earth to-day, many a heathen, Free-Religionist, Jew, many an "atheist" even, would gain his approval; while many a "Christian" would hear him say, "I never knew you."

4. The contrast is quite as remarkable between the kinds and classes of sins on which Jesus and the Church have placed their severest emphasis of condemnation. Those which he visited with the bitterest denunciations were the phariseeisms of pride, of self-seeking, of uncharitableness, of cruelty, of the lack of brotherliness and sympathy. Yet hardly one of these has ever stood in the way of church membership not only, but they have hardly been a hinderance to high position and distinguished honors. The sins of weakness and ignorance always called out his pity; but, not being respectable, the Church has poured on them the vials of her wrath.

In general, then, we may conclude, without fear of contradiction, that almost all the external rites, ceremonies, and institutions of the Church have been built up and established without the slightest authority in the words of Jesus; while many of them are there implicitly or expressly forbidden and condemned.

We pass now to that which has always occupied the post of chief honor and importance among the orthodox bodies of Protestantism,—the Creed. Rome has been accustomed to regard the organized Church as the "body of Christ," and membership in that, and conformity to its order, as the mat-

ter of chief importance. But, when Protestantism broke with Rome, it placed its main emphasis elsewhere. A certain inner experience was placed first. But this experience was dependent on, and could only spring out of, a certain faith or belief. This then, as the condition of all, of necessity came to the front, and took the place of prime importance. We are to close our discussion, then, by raising and answering the question as to whether Jesus held or taught the present orthodox creed of Protestantism. If he did not, then of course he was not a Christian in the sense in which that word is used to-day in England and America.

In replying to this question, I shall not take as the basis of comparison the creed of any particular branch of the Protestant body; for, if I did, the other denominations would not acknowledge its authority. I shall not take, then, as my standard the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterians or the Episcopalians, or the Methodists or the Baptists, or the Congregationalists. Fortunately, we have ready to our hand something better than either of these would be.

Some years ago, in order the more effectively to cope with the spirit and movements of modern civilization which were threatening the popular creed, the great bodies of European Protestantism organized themselves into one great Union, and took the name of the "Evangelical Alliance." Dropping their minor and unessential differences, they agreed upon certain articles of belief which they all considered necessary, which they all held in common, and which they all were willing to stand upon; and these articles they laid down as the planks of their Protestant platform. In January, 1877, an American Branch of this Evangelical Alliance was organized in New York. This American Branch readopted the European platform. In this creed, then, of the general Evangelical Alliance, the Orthodox Protestant Churches of both

Europe and America have volunteered to tell us what they regard as central and essential in Christianity. By their own voluntary declaration, then, they are bound; and of course none of them is at liberty to decline any consequences that may naturally follow.

You will permit me to remind you again that we are not to discuss the question as to whether the articles of this creed are true, but only as to whether Jesus teaches them. I will first quote the words of the creed in full, and then give the separate articles the brief treatment that our present purpose demands. The creed then :—

"1. The Divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures.

"2. The right and duty of private judgment in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

"3. The unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of the persons therein.

"4. The utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the Fall.

"5. The incarnation of the Son of God, His work of atonement for the sins of mankind and His mediatorial intercession and reign.

"6. The justification of the sinner by faith alone.

"7. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner.

"8. The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the eternal blessedness of the righteous and the eternal punishment of the wicked.

"9. The Divine institution of the Christian ministry, and the obligation and perpetuity of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper."

Now for comments as brief as we can make them and be intelligible.

As to the first article, the inspiration of the Scriptures, Jesus has not one single word to say. He treats the Old Testament with respect, and as possessing a certain degree of authority; and yet he does not hesitate to change and amend its precepts, treating them as local and temporary. Of course he says nothing of the New Testament, which was not then written.

As to the second article, the right and duty of private judgment, he asserts that plainly,— "Why even of your own selves judge ye not what is right?" — but confines it within the limits of no particular book, or even of any particular nation or religion.

As to the third article, he asserts the Unity, but says not one word about any Trinity. The only claim he makes for himself is that he is to be the Messiah; and the Messiah was never regarded by the Jews as other than a man.

Of the doctrine of depravity, the fourth article, if he had ever heard anything, he failed entirely to allude to it. If man did fall and plunge the whole race in ruin, and if Jesus came on purpose to save from the fall, it is very strange that he should never have mentioned it. This has been the very corner-stone of Christian theology. And yet, strange as it may seem, Jesus never once alludes to Adam or Eve, or the apple or the serpent, or the garden or the fall, or anything of the sort. And so far from seeming to think of human nature as depraved at birth, and of infants as being under God's wrath, he takes a little child in his arms, and makes it the very type of the divine kingdom.

As to the fifth article, incarnation, atonement etc. he has not one word to say.

The sixth article, justification by faith,—the central dogma of Lutheran Protestantism,— seems equally something of which Jesus has never heard. In the famous judgment scene

which he pictures, and where he himself is to be judge, you would suppose he would call attention to that which he held to be of prime importance. If he knew that something else was to be demanded, it was not less than culpable and cruel for him not to tell us. And yet, as the condition of acquittal at the Great Bar, he says not a single syllable of any church membership, of any baptism or supper, or ritual or prayers, or observance of days, or obedience to the clergy, or creed or faith,— not one word! The only condition he even alludes to is one which the Orthodox Church has always stigmatized as "rags," as "mere morality," — goodness and kindness, and pity and charity and help.

Of the seventh article, the conversion and sanctification of the sinner by the Holy Spirit, he seems to know as little as of any of the rest. His conversion is a simple change of mind or purpose, which he commands each to make for himself; and his santification is only a progressive learning to do and be good.

As to the eighth article of this creed of the Alliance, Jesus does, in some form, teach immortality and the resurrection. But he does not teach any judgment now future. The judgment he taught was to be at his coming, during the first century, and not in any time still to come. Whether he taught endless punishment is a question that hangs on the meaning of a Greek word that he never uttered, for he spoke Aramaic; and whether the Greek accurately translates his thought it is now impossible to tell. At any rate, the Greek word itself does not always mean "endless." And, if we may judge by the prevailing belief of his age, such great authorities as the late Emanuel Deutsch declare unequivocally that endless punishment was not one of those beliefs.

Concerning the last one of these articles, that which asserts the perpetuity of the ministry, and the ordinances, it is

enough to say that, since Jesus expected his own second coming and the new Messianic kingdom during the first century, and since in this kingdom none of these preparatory means would be needed or find any place, it is simply absurd to suppose that he expected any of these things to exist some hundreds of years after his time.

The result, now, of our brief survey, is hardly less than startling. The European and American Evangelical Alliance professes to have for its object the carrying forward and establishment of the work that Jesus began. And yet, if he should come back here to-day, and hold and teach what he held and taught eighteen hundred years ago, he could no more be received as a member of this Alliance than I could. It is perfectly plain, then, that, if the Evangelical Alliance is "Christian," Jesus is not. If the great organizations of the Roman or the Protestant name are the ones to which the name "Christian" properly and legitimately belongs, then it does not belong to Jesus. The two great essentials of the gospel of Jesus were the coming kingdom, and the conditions of sharing its triumph and glory. Concerning neither of these do the popular churches of Christendom hold or teach the doctrine of the Galilean.

We need, then, only be careful to love God, seek for and obey his laws, and try to help our fellow-men to do the same. We will not grasp after the name of "Christian," as at present defined. And if both Romanism and Protestantism cast us out of their communion, and drive us from the doors of their churches, it is only what they have already done with Jesus. The light of God still shines, his love still warms our hearts, and his truth still leads us toward a better future.

JESUS AND HUMANITY: or, CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE RELIGIONS.

The old Hebrew legends of Genesis tell us that God caused the earth to produce the grass and the herbs; or, as we should say to-day, these lower forms of life sprung naturally out of the soil. But, when it came to man, he was created by special supernatural power. Science now disallows any such distinction, and regards the higher and the lower forms alike as purely natural in their origin. All this does not touch the disputed questions about God or the soul or the immortal life; it only abolishes the old fictitious distinctions between natural and supernatural, and links all life together in one wondrous chain. As in the matter of the different forms of life, so, in regard to religions, Christendom has been accustomed to distinguish them into two classes,—natural, supernatural; human, divine; false, true. One religion, Christianity,—including Judaism as its precursor,—we are told, was made by God himself, and revealed to man perfect and complete. All others sprung up themselves, like wild flowers or weeds, out of the natural soil of the human heart. And, as these human hearts are depraved, of course their natural products have been wild, extravagant, poison-dripping, and only evil. It was the popular belief for hundreds of years — and Milton has given it poetic expression

in his *Paradise Lost*—that all the gods of the so-called natural religions were really devils,—the fallen angels,—who thus managed to lead mankind astray from the worship of the true God. These fallen angels wrought miracles, gave out oracles, and uttered prophesies, all in imitation of the true religion, and to divert mankind from it. Why God, if he really wanted men to worship him, should have permitted all this, was never explained.

But, as in the case of the different forms and grades of life, so also of the different kinds and grades of religion, science now tells us another story. What comparative biology disallows in the one case, comparative theology disallows in the other. So long as Christianity stood, a full-grown figure, against a background of darkness and ignorance, having no known or traceable connection with anything else earthly or human, it was easy and natural to think it must have sprung complete out of the opening heavens, as Minerva did from the head of Jove. But a wider, deeper, older knowledge of man and of life on earth enables us to trace the origin and development of Christianity and of all the other religions, just as easily and naturally as we can trace the origin and growth of the grasses, the trees, and the different and advancing forms of the animal world. We can find the root, follow up the trunk, trace out the branches, note the budding leaves, and distinguish the natural fruit of nearly all the great religions of man. And the result is that we now know that religion is as natural a development of human nature as is government, or art, or science, or literature, or the family. And it takes this shape or that, according to the nature and quality of a particular race, age, or degree of civilization.

This does not at all impair the reality or divineness of religion. It only enhances these, as showing that human

nature is itself inherently and naturally religious and divine. This natural divinity of all religious life and growth has found what we may well regard as perfect poetic expression in Emerson's *Problem*. And, in spite of its familiarity, we must quote from it: —

> "Not from a vain or shallow thought
> His awful Jove young Phidias brought;
> Never from lips of cunning fell
> The thrilling Delphic Oracle;
> Out from the heart of nature rolled
> The burdens of the Bible old;
> The litanies of nations came,
> Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
> Up from the burning core below,—
> The canticles of love and woe. . . .
> These temples grew as grows the grass;
> Art might obey, but not surpass.
> The passive Master lent his hand
> To the vast soul that o'er him planned;
> And the same power that reared the shrine
> Bestrode the tribes that knelt within."

Were there time, and were it needful, I could trace for you the natural growth of all the great religions. We should find ourselves away back in savagery, many thousands of years in the past; we should find the half-brutal man trembling in the presence of a stick or stone or toad; we should see him afraid of the living being that he supposed to dwell in the cloud or the lightning or the wind; we should see him peopling his jungle with the spirits of his dead ancestors and warriors; then we should follow him through polytheism, through henotheism, up to monotheism; then we should see his one God gradually purified and elevated, taking on ever the higher forms and attributes of his own ever-advancing ideal of beauty and goodness and truth; until at last we

should hear Jesus speaking of the one "Spirit" to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth"; or Wordsworth singing of

> "A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts:"

or Matthew Arnold tracing through all history "the Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness."

If we wish to find the fountain-head of Christianity, we must travel up the ages more than eighteen hundred years, and must go beyond the boundaries of Palestine. Its ultimate earthly source is the human heart, lost in the depths and the darkness of an unexplored antiquity. Like a river that bears a special designation, it is made up of many tributaries that have flowed into it under other names. We can trace its confluents into the preceding paganism of Rome, into Greece, into Egypt, into Persia, and into the far-off and recently unburied civilization and mythology of the people of Akkad, that lived in the Euphrates Valley long before Abraham was born or the city of Babylon was founded. From many a far-distant fountain, the tiny streams arose, flowed on, gathering volume as they flowed, till, joining all in one, they took one name from the Jewish Messianic hope; and Christianity, like a mighty river, swept its broad current down the centuries.

Christianity, then, is a natural religion, in precisely the same sense as is any other historic religion. It differs from all the rest only as a masterpiece of art differs from those of inferior genius; only as the mightiest, most eminent, and widest-spreading tree of the forest differs from the smaller growths it over-tops and out-towers. All the religions of the world are, or have been, the sincere and earnest effort of men seeking after God, "if haply they might feel after him and find him," who is "not far from any one of us," and in whom

"we live and move and have our being." Oftentimes men, as Tennyson expresses it, only —

> "Stretch weak hands of faith, and grope
> And gather dust and chaff";

but still it is true that every religion, from lowest to highest, has simply been God's child, man, kneeling upon a lower or a higher step of the

> "World's great altar-stairs
> That slope through darkness up to God."

Christianity is doubtless the highest and best of all the historic religions. But it possesses no supernatural birth or claim that entitles it to look down with scorn or alien contempt upon its "poor relations" of other names.

In comparing and contrasting Christianity with other religions, it has been common for apologists to take their own at its best and the others at their worst, which is obviously unjust. If Buddhism seems a vile superstition, judged by the praying windmills of Thibet or the moral standards of Siam, we may well ask ourselves the question as to how Christianity would look to an intelligent foreigner when judged by the vulgar wonder of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, or the morality of a San Francisco mob pursuing a Chinaman? And if we say, "These are corruptions and perversions of pure Christianity, and it ought fairly to be judged by the character and teachings of Jesus," it is freely granted. But must we not also grant a similar thing concerning the other great religions?

As a matter of historic fact, every one of the great religions has had a development away from and inconsistent with the simple teachings of the masters whose names they bear. You cannot possibly deduce historic Christianity from the life and words of Jesus. Neither can you deduce historic

Buddhism from the life and words of Gautama. Glance at one or two illustrations. The Parsis, or Fire-worshippers, are known in the modern world as the principal representatives of the great religion taught and founded by Zarathustra. And yet fire-worship was no part of the original religion of Zarathustra at all. It crept into the pure, spiritual cultus of Mazdeism from the pagan nature-worship of a people whom the Persians had conquered. And this cuckoo element — no part of the original brood — has almost crowded the true birds out of the nest. So popular Buddhism has come to be almost exclusively a system of rites and ceremonies; and yet Gautama was quite as bitter against these meaningless externals as was Jesus himself. The Church is so full of similar departures from the words of Jesus that it is difficult to choose any one specimen. You need only to read over his teachings, and then open your eyes.

The causes of these perversions and degradations of the high, spiritual doctrine of the great religious founders is not hard to trace. The case of Zarathustra, mentioned above, may illustrate one cause. The Persians conquered a foreign people with its foreign religion. But the conquered religion was too firmly rooted in the national life to be destroyed. So it, in turn, conquers the conquerors, and at last becomes incorporated in the original belief. There are parasites in religion as well as in the forests; and not unfrequently the parasite overtops and sucks the very life out of a vigorous tree. Another cause Jesus speaks of in its influence on the Mosaic religion. "Moses," he said, "suffered you to do" such and such things, "because of the hardness of your hearts." That is, when a religion is very much above and beyond the intellectual and moral life of the people, it frequently becomes transformed and degraded to their level. Both these influences, and others that there is no time to notice, have

been at work upon Christianity, and have helped to make the popular system what it is. Crude symbols, intended at first only to translate spiritual truth and bring it in range of the popular thought, have at last taken the place of the spiritual truth, and hidden it out of sight. And when Christianity overran European paganism, instead of substituting Christianity for it, it adopted and baptized it. So that more than half of Roman Catholicism is only paganism thinly veneered and rechristened.

In seeking the comparative place of Jesus, then, among those who have given their names to great religious movements, we must, in order to be fair, compare the original teachings, and not the popular developments only. And we must also take note of one other thing. It is sometimes thoughtlessly and illogically assumed that, since Christianity has been the religion of the world's greatest civilization, we must therefore give Christianity the credit of having created that civilization. You will not accuse me of any disposition to underrate Christianity; and yet I cannot help thinking that this claim cannot be made out. The height to which a particular tree will grow depends not simply on the nature of the tree, but also on the soil and the conditions of climate that surround it. So the influence of an idea upon a people depends not only on the idea, but also on the quality of the race-stock, and the physical, mental, and moral capacity of the people. Mexico and South America have the same opportunities for all that distinguishes modern civilization that are open to the rest of the world. Why, then, are they not equal to the United States, to Germany and England? We can put the answer into one word,—race. A few nationalities have developed the physical, mental, and moral qualities that make them the leaders of the world. And it is just these natural world-leaders that the natural course of human

history made Christians. And that Christianity has not done it all is apparent when you reflect that where Christianity has taken possession of other races, instead of the religion's lifting them to our level, they have quite as often dragged the religion down to theirs.

We are now ready to ask and answer the question, What is the comparative rank of Jesus among the great religious masters of history?

There is a strong disposition in many quarters, even among liberals and rational thinkers, to so exalt Jesus and Christianity as to make all other religions of very little account. Of course this is all natural. We can hardly help being partial to that in which we have been trained and which we so tenderly love. Each man's mother, to him, must be better than all other mothers the world has ever seen. He would be less of a man than he ought, were it otherwise. And still, as we grow older, we must become able to think that other men stand in the same relation to their mothers that we do to ours. And, even could we prove that our mother is finer-looking and better than all others, we could hardly respect the man who would lightly desert his own as the result of our proof.

And then we ought to remember that we are in danger of depreciating God himself by our over-exaltation of Jesus. If indeed God has given us the only respectable religion, what can we think of his impartiality and common fatherhood? I, for one, would like to think that my Father in heaven had not forgotten all the other children in his remembrance of me. I can even love him a little better, if I can feel that he also loves and cares for the rest of his human family. In giving to Christianity, then, more than belongs to it, we may find that we are taking away something of his goodness and our reverence from our heavenly Father.

I should be glad to believe, though I cannot do it, that all other religions and all other teachers were just as good as Christianity and Jesus.

There is no time, nor is there any necessity, for my entering into an analysis of even a few of the greater religions. We can indeed select from the higher teachings of all of them moral and spiritual sayings worthy to be placed alongside of the Sermon on the Mount. A collection of them might be made that any minister might read in his pulpit as his Scripture lesson, and few of his hearers would know that he had not taken them from the New Testament. Of Tauism, Confucianism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Zarathustrianism, Mohammedanism, the religion of Egypt, of the Grecian and Roman sages, all this is true. For illustration of this, you are referred to Conway's *Anthology*, and to Lydia Maria Child's *Aspirations of the World.* At the same time, I suppose there is not more than one or two of the great religions that any serious and intelligent thinker would look upon as worthy to be placed alongside of Christianity by way of comparison. I shall pass by Judaism, because it is popularly regarded as a preparatory stage, and really a part, of Christianity. There is, then, only one left that we need stop to consider; for, unquestionably, outside of the life and teaching of Jesus the Christ, the world has no religious founder at all comparable to Gautama the Buddha. Let us, then, place these side by side.

There is the more propriety in doing this, because the institutional development of the two religions is so strikingly similar. When the first Catholic missionary went to China and came in contact with Buddhism, he was astounded. And he sent home the report that the devil had been there ahead of him, and had so closely copied the true faith as to make it next to impossible for him to gain any foothold. Almost

every rite and ceremony of the Catholic Church was there in advance of his coming. In Thibet, the Grand Llama may stand for the Pope, only the doctrine has developed one step beyond the papacy. Not only is he infallible, but he is actually worshipped. One step more, and the Pope will become a Grand Llama. But Buddhism is five or six hundred years older than Christianity, and so has had time to develop more completely.

Now for a few parallels. Buddhism sprang out of Brahmanism, gained little success in the old religion, became a missionary faith, and made its chief conquests in other lands. Christianity sprang out of Judaism, gained little success in the old religion, became a missionary faith, and made its chief conquests in other lands. Both of them started as moral reforms, spread chiefly among the common people, and had as their ultimate aim the deliverance of man from sorrow and death. Both had their monastic systems and their battles with "the world." Both at last converted kings, and had the great of the earth as patrons. And both, as they entered other lands, became changed and corrupted, like a river into which all kinds of waters and soils are poured. Both had their general councils to settle their articles of faith; and both have their sacred books, their writers of apologies, their witnesses and martyrs. Buddhism is about five hundred years older than Christianity, and numbers among its followers about five hundred millions, as against about three hundred and twenty-seven millions of Christians of every name. And, then, it must be said, for the credit of Buddhism, that it has never persecuted; while the skirts of Christianity, alas! are bedrabbled with blood.

Pass now to look a little more closely at the personality and doctrine of the two great teachers. For many things that I cannot stop to touch upon, I refer you to Mr. Edwin

Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, a beautiful poem as well as an accurate exposition of Gautama's life and word.*

Both Gautama and Jesus are overgrown with myth and legend, like a church beautified and at the same time half-hidden by ivy and running vines and clinging wild roses. Gautama is miraculously heralded and miraculously born. He is tempted and opposed by evil spirits. He has his period of study and retirement and doubt before he appears as the Saviour of men. Since his death, he has been deified and worshipped. And, to more millions than those that love and worship Jesus, his "name" is still the "only one known under heaven among men by which they" think they "must be saved."

Christendom has always and justly exalted the self-sacrifice and devotion of Jesus. Among the Buddha's followers also, his act of consecration has always been called "The Great Renunciation." And, indeed, we must confess that the self-sacrifice in Gautama's case appears to be fully equal to that of Jesus. If either here must bear the palm, it is certainly Gautama; for he was a prince by birth, and he gave up a throne to make common cause with the lowest and poorest of the people,—and that, too, in a country where caste has reached a development never known elsewhere; where the highest were higher and the lowest lower than in any other land.

There is another curious parallel. Jesus is the personal name; and "the Christ" is the name of the office, and has given the name to the religion. So Gautama is the personal name of the Indian founder; "the Buddha" is the official title, and has given the name to the religion.

* Mr. Rhuys-Davids' book on "Buddhism," published by the London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, teaches the same doctrine, and sustains the accuracy of *The Light of Asia*.

A recent writer in *The Index* has referred to Gautama's leaving his wife and child as a defect in his character. But we must remember, from his stand-point,—and he indeed says the same,—he was leaving them at unspeakable cost to his tender love, in order that he might find a way of salvation that would ultimately include them also in its wide embrace. And it is only just also that we should remember that Jesus himself speaks slightingly of marriage as compared with the better state of the celibate. In Matthew xix., 11, he teaches that, for those "to whom it is given," the single state is better.

What now, in a word, are the central things in the Buddha's religion? He was a prince who became so impressed with the sorrows of men that he determined to leave his throne and home, and go in search of some way of deliverance. This he did. He tried the schools, the discipline of the ascetics, and all the methods of his age, until he became convinced that they all were inadequate. Then he meditated and studied until he believed he had attained to Buddhahood, that is, the condition of one "enlightened." He saw "The Way." Then he devoted his life to teaching this "way of salvation" to his fellow-men. Arnold has beautifully given us the condition of mind out of which his high resolve was born: —

"The vail is rent
Which blinded me. I am as all these men
Who cry upon their gods and are not heard
Or are not heeded —*yet there must be aid!*
For them and me and all there must be help!
Perchance the gods have need of help themselves,
Being so feeble that when sad lips cry
They cannot save! *I* would not let one cry
Whom I *could* save! How can it be that Brahm
Would make a world and keep it miserable,
Since, if all-powerful, he leaves it so,
He is not good; and, if not powerful,
He is not God?"

Does not this sound very modern? The religion in which Gautama was reared taught one supreme God, Brahm; but he was unconscious, and cared not for man. The rest of the gods, the hosts of polytheism, Gautama was wise enough to despise and disbelieve in. Since they do not help anybody, he says, sarcastically, that perhaps they need help themselves. At any rate, he teaches his followers not to pray to nor depend upon them.

Here, perhaps, is the reason why he has been called an atheist. For he clearly recognizes the great power that is "in and through all things," — as clearly as does Wordsworth or Matthew Arnold.

> "Before beginning and without an end,
> As space eternal and as surety sure,
> Is fixed a Power Divine which moves to good;
> Only its laws endure."

We should not now call the man an atheist who could use language like that.

Gautama's central doctrines can be put in a few words. First is that which he called *Dharma*. In this he wondrously anticipated one phase of the modern scientific doctrine of heredity. Man makes himself, he said. He is the result of all his past thoughts and deeds. And this law he can never escape. In each new birth,— for the belief in the transmigration of souls underlies the whole system,— the man's character and condition are strictly and exactly the result of all his previous lives.

Secondly comes the doctrine of *Karma*. Gautama held, as do many modern scientists, that man had no soul separate from his organization, and that all his intellectual and moral life was the result of this organization. But Karma represented a mysterious law by which each succeeding life was bound to the one next preceding it.

Thirdly, the cause of all sorrow and evil was *desire.* The shows and pleasures of life were an illusion; and so long as a man was led on by a desire for them, so long he would be whirled about on the restless wheel of change. So long he would be reborn, and compelled to go through the endless round of disappointments and losses and tears and sickness and death.

Fourthly, then, salvation was to be found by the extinguishment of all desire; for he who is above all want is freed from the possibility of loss or sorrow. This condition was *Nirvana.* This is Buddhist salvation.

The best scholars have disputed as to the precise meaning of this word. Some locate Nirvana in this life, and make it a spiritual condition; some place it in the next, and make it correspond to the Christian heaven. But one thing is clear. It is a condition where all desire and care have passed away; and, if it be not annihilation, it is so much like non-existence that the Occidental mind can hardly make any practical distinction.

But, when we come to the last point of his doctrine,—the condition, the *means of salvation,*—Gautama towers high above any other religious teacher excepting Jesus. This way of life is nothing less than character, moral goodness, obedience to the laws of right living. And the morality of Buddhism need not shrink from being placed side by side with that of Christianity itself.

As to the personal character of Gautama as compared with that of Jesus, perhaps we may leave them standing side by side without saying one disparaging word of either of them. There is no ground for attributing absolute perfection to either. But, on the other hand, for neither of them do we need feel called upon to offer any apology.

It only remains for us now to indicate two or three respects

in which the religion of the Galilean is grander and better adapted to civilization than that of the Sakya.

1. While Gautama teaches an external morality that perhaps is quite equal to that of Jesus, he does not penetrate so deeply into the human heart, as being the source and spring of all good and evil. With Jesus, all good is in the one word, "love"; and all evil, in one other word, "hate." Here Jesus puts his finger on the emotional mainspring of all life. This is eternal truth.

2. Gautama has no doctrine of divine Fatherhood. Man is an orphan, and is thrown upon his own unaided resources. Jesus teaches that a wise and loving Father orders all life, and that an infinitely tender love watches over all the children of men.

However any may doubt or question this, still, in the light of science itself, we know that something in this direction is true. The power that lives in and works through the universe is on the side of right — that is, the keeping of its own laws. Man is not alone. By studying and obeying the laws of the world, he may put the universe at his back as an omnipotent helper. He may launch his little boat on "the stream of tendency" that moves ever toward the better future, and by its almighty current feel himself swept on.

3. And, lastly, Gautama's is a religion of despair. This life of desire is an evil, and the source of all our sorrow. Salvation is to cease wishing, and attain the calm of nonentity. The New Testament rings with the cry, "We are saved by hope!" Desire, hunger, long for all good things! Hunger and its satisfactions, an ever-increasing capacity and an ever-increasing supply,— this is the law of life and growth. "Blessed — hunger and thirst! — shall be filled!" As plants hunger for light and dew, and grow thereby, so man is eagerly to look up and on, and grow ever to more and more.

There gleams ever before the race the light of an eternal hope. "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before,"— this, though the words of Paul, is the very spirit of Jesus.

The spirit at the heart of Jesus, then, surpasses that of all other religious teachers. Let science give us her body of ascertained and verified truth, and let the spirit of Jesus be its soul, and tell me what more we need to make the universal and eternal religion?